



Sociology In Our Times

THE ESSENTIALS

12e

DIANA KENDALL





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SOCIOLOGY

In Our Times

The Essentials 12e

Diana Kendall
Baylor University



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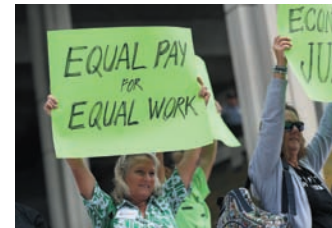
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Welcome to the twelfth edition of *Sociology in Our Times: The Essentials*! This best-selling text has been extensively used for more than two decades in college and university classrooms across the United States, Canada, and other nations. However, *Sociology in Our Times: The Essentials* continues to live up to its name, remaining highly current and relevant to today's students and professors and reflecting the latest available data and new insights on what is going on in our nation and world from a sociological perspective.

The twelfth edition focuses on social change and ways in which media, particularly social media, and various other forms of technology inevitably bring about new ways of living, interacting with others, or doing some activity or task.

Like previous editions, the twelfth edition highlights topics ranging from popular culture icons and social networking to far more serious issues of our times, such as the social effects of massive natural and human disasters, gun violence, political unrest, terrorism, war, and the individual and social consequences of problems such as growing inequality between the wealthiest and the poorest people and nations, persistent unemployment, migration concerns worldwide, and other persistent issues and problems.

The second decade of the twenty-first century offers unprecedented challenges and opportunities for each of us as individuals and for our larger society and world. In the United States, we can no longer take for granted the peace and economic prosperity that many—but far from all—people were able to enjoy in previous decades. However, even as some things change, others remain the same, and among the things that have not changed are the significance of education and the profound importance of understanding how and why people act the way they do. It is also important to analyze how societies grapple with issues such as economic hardship and the threat of terrorist attacks and war and to gain a better understanding of why many of us seek stability in our social institutions—including family, religion, education, government, and media—even if we believe that some of these institutions might benefit from certain changes.

As with previous editions, the twelfth edition of *Sociology in Our Times: The Essentials* highlights the relevance of sociology to help students connect with the subject and the full spectrum of topics and issues that it encompasses. It achieves this connection by providing a meaningful, concrete context within which to learn. Specifically, it presents

the stories—the *lived experiences*—of real individuals and the social issues they face while discussing a diverse array of classical and contemporary theories and examining interesting and relevant research. The first-person commentaries that begin each chapter in “Sociology & Everyday Life” show students how sociology can help them understand the important questions and social issues that not only these other individuals face but that they themselves may face as well.

Sociology in Our Times: The Essentials includes the best work of classical and established contemporary sociologists, and it weaves an inclusive treatment of *all* people—across lines of race/ethnicity, class, gender, age, ability/disability, and other social attributes—into the examination of sociology in *all* chapters. It does not water down the treatment of sociology for students! *Sociology in Our Times: The Essentials* provides students with the most relevant information about sociological thinking and helps them to consider contemporary social issues through the lens of diversity. While guiding students to appreciate how sociology can help them better understand the world, this text also encourages them to see themselves as *members of their communities* and shows them what can be done in responding to social issues. As a result, students learn how sociology is not only a collection of concepts and theories but also a field that can make a difference in their lives, their communities, and the world at large.

What's New to the Twelfth Edition?

The twelfth edition builds on the best of previous editions but places more emphasis on pressing social and political issues facing the United States and other nations of the world in the 2020s. Like previous editions, I have tried to offer professors and students alike new insights, learning tools, and opportunities to apply the content of each chapter to relevant sociological issues and major concerns of the twenty-first century. It is my top priority as an author to make each edition better than the previous one by revising and updating all chapters thoroughly, providing new discussions about contemporary issues and the embattled political climate in the nation, and most important of all, sharing the latest scholarship in sociological theory and research. For example, all statistics included in the twelfth edition, such as data relating to crime, demographics, health, and the economy, were the latest available at the time of this writing.

To assist your students in learning about sociology and reflecting their knowledge on tests, I have continued to revise the learning objectives at the beginning of each chapter and offer students a study guide at the end of each chapter. The learning objectives have been carefully conceived to help the reader focus on the most crucial concepts of the chapter.

Changes by Chapter

CHAPTER 1: The Sociological Perspective and Research Process

- Updated Learning Objectives
- Updated chapter-opening lived experience to show continued linkages among social media, bullying, and suicide regarding young people in the United States
- Updated “Sociology & Everyday Life: The Sociology of Suicide Trends Today”
- Updated “Sociology & Everyday Life” quiz: “How Much Do You Know About Suicide?”
- Updated “Sociology in Global Perspective: Durkheim’s Classical Study of Suicide Applied to Twenty-First-Century India”
- Updated “The Importance of a Global Sociological Imagination”
- Updated Figure 1.3: “Using Our Global Sociological Imagination to Understand Suicide”
- Updated discussion of contemporary relevance of Auguste Comte’s focus on science relating to sociology as a STEM discipline
- Updated Figure 1.8: “Age-Adjusted U.S. Suicide Rates by Race and Sex”
- Updated “Understanding Statistical Data Presentations”
- Updated Table 1.1, “Rates (per 100,000 U.S. Population) for Homicide, Suicide, and Firearm-Related Deaths of Youths Ages 15–19, by Gender, 2017”
- Revised and updated “Sociology and Social Policy: Establishing Policies to Help Prevent Military Suicides”
- Updated Figure 1.14: “National Suicide Statistics by State at a Glance”

CHAPTER 2: Culture

- Updated Learning Objectives
- Revised and updated opening lived experience about the relationship between food and cultural diversity
- Revised and updated “Cultural Universals”
- Updated discussion of “Symbols”
- Updated section on “Language,” including “Language and Gender,” and “Language, Race, and Ethnicity”
- Updated Figure 2.6: “States with Official English Laws”
- Updated Figure 2.7: “Languages Spoken at Home, Other Than English?”
- Updated discussion about “Cultural Diversity”

- Updated Figure 2.11: “Heterogeneity of U.S. Society” regarding religious affiliation, household income, and racial and ethnic distribution
- Updated “Culture Shock” regarding the Yanomamö
- Revised and updated “High Culture and Popular Culture”

CHAPTER 3: Socialization

- Updated Learning Objectives
- Updated and revised Figure 3.4: “Types of Maltreatment Among Children Under Age 18”
- Updated discussion of “The Family”
- Updated “Mass Media”
- Revised and updated “Sociology in Global Perspective: Open Doors: Study Abroad and Global Socialization”
- Revised “Looking Ahead: Socialization, Social Change, and Your Future”—regarding digital natives and digital immigrants in higher education

CHAPTER 4: Social Structure and Interaction in Everyday Life

- Updated Learning Objectives
- Revised and updated “Sociology & Everyday Life: Does Social Structure Contribute to Homelessness?” to include how eviction affects poor people and can contribute to homelessness
- Updated “Status” and “Master Status” discussions
- Deleted former Figure 4.4: “Causes of Family Homelessness in 22 Cities”
- Changed Figure 4.5: “Role Expectation, Performance, Conflict, and Strain” to Figure 4.4
- Changed Figure 4.6 to Figure 4.5 and updated caption
- Changed Figure 4.8: “Who Are the Homeless?” to Figure 4.7 and revised figure
- Updated “Sociology and Social Policy”
- Updated “You Can Make a Difference: Offering a Helping Hand to Homeless People”

CHAPTER 5: Groups and Organizations

- Updated Learning Objectives
- Updated opening lived experience to include examples of attachment to digital devices and face time.
- Revised “Sociology & Social Policy: Technological and Social Change in the Workplace: BYOD?”
- Added new “You Can Make a Difference: Can Websites and Social Media Help You Become a More Helpful Person?”

CHAPTER 6: Deviance and Crime

- Updated Learning Objectives
- Updated “Sociology & Everyday Life: The Carnage from Mass Shootings Just Keeps Going On”
- Updated discussion and examples throughout theories of deviance and crime section
- Updated crime statistics throughout chapter

- Updated “What Causes Deviance, and Why Is It Functional for Society?” to include information about the 2018 Women’s March
- Updated “Sociology in Global Perspective: Gangs Around the World: A Growing Problem”
- Updated “Deviance and Power Relations” to include the stereotyping of African American perpetrators
- Updated Figure 6.10: “Distribution of Arrests by Type of Offense, 2018”
- Updated Figure 6.11: “The FBI Crime Clock, 2018”
- Updated “Occupational and Corporate Crime”
- Updated “Internet Crime”
- Updated Figure 6.13: “Top Reported Internet Crime Types, 2018”
- Updated Figure 6.18: “Arrest Rates by Gender, 2018”
- Updated Figure 6.19: “Arrest Rates by Race, 2018”
- Revised and updated discussion of “The Police”
- Revised “Juvenile Courts” to include the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention
- Updated Figure 6.24: “Death Row Census, May 31, 2019”
- Updated “Sociology & Social Policy: The Eternal Political War over Gun Control”
- Updated “Questions for Critical Thinking”

CHAPTER 7: Class and Stratification in the United States

- Updated Learning Objectives
- Updated opening lived experience about the “American Dream”
- Updated statistics on income, poverty, health insurance, and other issues pertaining to inequality throughout the chapter
- Updated “Sociology in Global Perspective: A Day in Your Life: How Are You Touched by Modern Slavery?”
- Updated discussion of “The Upper (Capitalist) Class”
- Updated “The Upper-Middle Class” to include the consumer class
- Updated “The Middle Class” to include a discussion of erosion of upward mobility and achievement of the American Dream
- Revised “The Working Class” to include more about pink collar occupations
- Updated content under “The Underclass”
- Updated Figure 7.12: “Distribution of Aggregate Income in the United States, 2018”
- Updated Figure 7.13: “Mean Household Income in the United States, 2018”
- Updated Figure 7.14: “Median Household Income by Race/Ethnicity in the United States, 2018”
- Updated “Wealth Inequality” to include closing the racial wealth gap
- Updated Figure 7.15: “Racial Divide in Net Worth, 2017”
- Updated Figure 7.16: “Rate of Uninsurance by Household Income, 2018”
- Revised “Physical Health, Mental Health, and Nutrition” to include a discussion about “lunch shaming” in schools

- Updated Figure 7.18: “U.S. Poverty Rates by Age, 1959–2018”
- Updated Figure 7.19: “Poverty Rates by Age and Sex, 2018”
- Revised “Solving the Poverty Problem” to include issues regarding reducing or solving the poverty problem
- Updated “Looking Ahead: U.S. Stratification in the Future”
- Updated “You Can Make a Difference: Students Helping Others through The Campus Kitchen”

CHAPTER 8: Global Stratification

- Updated Learning Objectives
- Updated “Sociology & Everyday Life” quiz: “How Much Do You Know About Global Wealth and Poverty?”
- Updated statistics on income, poverty, and other issues pertaining to inequality throughout the chapter
- Updated “Wealth and Poverty in Global Perspective”
- Deleted Figure 8.1: “Wealth and Population by Region, 2015”
- Updated Figure 8.3: “High-, Middle-, and Low-Income Economies in Global Perspective” (now Figure 8.2)
- Updated “Concept: Quick Review: Classification of Economies by Income”
- Updated “Global Poverty and Human Development Issues”
- Updated Figure 8.6: “Indicators of Human Development” (now Figure 8.5)
- Updated “Education and Literacy” to include expected years of schooling and definition of *literate person*
- Updated information on *maquiladora* plants
- Revised “Looking Ahead: Global Inequality in the Future”

CHAPTER 9: Race and Ethnicity

- Updated Learning Objectives
- Updated opening lived experience about the persistence of racism and police discrimination against persons of color
- Updated data and other information on all racial and ethnic categories throughout the chapter
- Revised “Sociology & Social Policy: Racist Incidents on College Campus Versus First Amendment Right to Freedom of Speech”
- Updated “Racism” to include newer examples of overt racism and beliefs regarding the First Amendment’s guarantee of freedom of speech
- Updated “WASPs and Sports”
- Updated “Discrimination Against White Ethnicities” to include examples of stereotypes of white ethnicities offered in film and television and information about anti-Semitism
- Revised and updated discussions of “Indochinese Americans,” “Korean Americans,” and “Japanese Americans”
- Revised and updated discussion of “Mexican Americans or Chicanos/as” to include effects of Trump Administration policies

- Updated discussion of “Puerto Ricans” to include effects of Hurricane Maria and living conditions of Puerto Ricans on the U.S. mainland
- Updated “Cuban Americans”
- Revised and updated “Latinx and Sports”
- Revised and updated “Middle Eastern Americans and North African Americans” to include North African Americans and Trump Administration policies
- Revised “Iranian (Persian) Americans”
- Updated “Discrimination” to include Trump Administration policies
- Updated “Middle Eastern Americans and Sports”
- Added research by Demographer William H. Frey under “Growing Racial and Ethnic Diversity and Hostility in the United States”
- Revised “You Can Make a Difference: Working for Racial and Gender Harmony on College Campuses”

CHAPTER 10: Sex, Gender, and Sexuality

- Updated Learning Objectives
- Updated discussion of “Measuring Sexual Orientation”
- New discussion of “The Great Divide That Doesn’t Stop”
- Revised and updated discussion of LGBTQ issues throughout the chapter
- Updated sections on socialization
- Updated “Mass Media and Gender Socialization”
- Updated Table 10.3: “Percentage of the Workforce Represented by Women, African Americans, Hispanics, and Asian Americans in Selected Occupations”
- Updated Figure 10.11: “The Wage Gap, 2019”
- Updated Figure 10.12: “Women’s Median Annual Earnings as a Percentage of Men’s Median Annual Earnings in Same Racial/Ethnic Category, 2018”
- Updated discussion of “The Human Capital Model” regarding the “motherhood penalty”
- Deleted former Figure 10.13: “Women’s Earnings as a Percentage of Men’s Earnings by State, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico, 2014”
- Revised “Multicultural Feminism”

CHAPTER 11: Families and Intimate Relationships

- Updated Learning Objectives
- Updated chapter opening lived experience and quiz about “Sociology & Everyday Life: How Much Do You Know About Contemporary Trends in U.S. Family Life?”
- Revised statistics on families throughout chapter
- Updated discussion of “Extended and Nuclear Families”
- Updated “The Contemporary Family—Family Diversity in the Twenty-first Century”
- Updated data on cohabitation and domestic partnerships throughout chapter
- Added content about matriarchal societies under “Power and Authority in Families”
- Replaced previous Figure 11.7 with new Figure 11.7, “Percentage of U.S. Households by Type, 1947 to 2019”

- Revised “Marriage” to include new discussion of the downward trend in the number of married U.S. households and the upward swing in the age of many first marriages
- Updated content about same-sex marriage and LGBTQ rights throughout chapter
- Updated “Sociology in Global Perspective: Wombs-for-Rent: Commercial Surrogacy in India”
- Updated “Deciding to Have Children”
- Updated Figure 11.10: “U.S. Birth Rates per 1,000 Females Ages 15–19, by Race/Ethnicity, 1990–2018”
- Updated Figure 11.12: “Living Arrangements of Children Under 18 Years Old for Selected Years, 1970–2019”
- Updated “Children in Foster Care” to include reasons for children’s removal from their own homes
- Updated Figure 11.14: “U.S. Divorce Rate by State, 1990–2017”
- Revised “Looking Ahead: Family Issues in the Future”

CHAPTER 12: Education and Religion

- Updated Learning Objectives
- Updated the “Sociology & Everyday Life: How Much Do You Know About the Effects of Religion on U.S. Education?”
- Updated statistics for education and religion throughout the chapter
- Updated Figure 12.7: “Percentage Distribution of Total Public Elementary–Secondary School System Revenue, 2017–2018”
- Updated Figure 12.8: “Status Dropout Rates for 16- to 24-Year-Olds, by Gender and Race/Ethnicity, 2017–2018”
- Updated “Racial Segregation and Resegregation”
- Updated “Homeschooling”
- Updated “School Safety and Violence at All Levels”
- Revised and updated “Four-Year Colleges and Universities”
- Updated “The High Cost of a College Education”
- Revised “Racial and Ethnic Differences in Enrollment” to include a new study by Chun and Feagin
- Revised and updated Figure 12.13: “Highest Level of Educational Attainment of the U.S. Population Ages 25 and Over by Race and Hispanic Origin: 2018”
- Revised Figure 12.15: “Original Locations of the World’s Major Religions”
- Updated “Sociology & Social Policy: Fighting It Out on the Football Field: Prayer in Public Schools and the Issue of Separation of Church and State”
- Updated Figure 12.19: “U.S. Religious Traditions’ Membership”
- Revised and updated “Looking Ahead: Education and Religion in the Future”

CHAPTER 13: Politics and the Economy in Global Perspective

- Updated Learning Objectives
- Revised “Sociology & Everyday Life” to include the 2016 Election of President Donald Trump

- Updated “Politics, Power, and Authority”
- Updated Figure 13.4: “Outside Spending Including Super PACs in the 2016 Presidential Election”
- Updated Figure 13.6: “Major U.S. Political Parties”
- Updated “Discontent with the Current Political System and Parties” to include the 2016 election of President Donald Trump and projections for the 2020 presidential elections
- Updated “Voter Turnout and Political Preferences”
- Updated Figure 13.8: “Voter Participation in the 2016 Presidential Election by Race and Ethnicity”
- Revised “Voter Turnout in Swing (“Battleground”) States”
- Updated Figure 13.9: “2016 Presidential Election: State by State”
- Revised “Voter Apathy or Something Else?”
- Updated Figure 13.10: “The ‘Typical’ Federal Civilian Employee, 2018”
- Updated Table 13.1: “*Forbes* List of the World’s 15 Largest Public Companies Based on Market Capitalization”
- Updated Table 13.2: “The Music Industry’s Big Three”
- Updated Figure 13.13: “The General Motors Board of Directors”
- Revised and updated “Sociology in Global Perspective: China’s Economic Slowdown and the Fate of Factory and Office Workers”
- Updated data and statistics about unemployment, labor unions, worker activism throughout the chapter
- Updated “You Can Make a Difference: Keeping an Eye on the Media”
- Updated “Looking Ahead: Politics and the Global Economy in the Future”

CHAPTER 14: Health, Health Care, and Disability

- Updated Learning Objectives
- Updated “Sociology & Everyday Life: Medicine as a Social Institution”
- Updated “Sociology & Everyday Life” quiz: “How Much Do You Know About Health, Illness, and Health Care?”
- Updated information and statistics on illness and health care throughout the chapter
- Updated discussions about life expectancy, drug use, STDs, health insurance, and disability throughout the chapter
- Revised “Health in Global Perspective”
- Updated “Sociology in Global Perspective: Medical Crises and Response in the Aftermath of Natural Disasters”
- Updated “Alcohol” and problems associated with alcohol abuse
- Updated Figure 14.5: “Percentage of Adults Who Binge Drink”
- Updated “Illegal Drugs,” particularly marijuana use and changes in state laws on illegal drug use
- Updated Figure 14.8: “Chlamydia—Rates of Reported Cases by Age Group and Sex, United States, 2018”

- Updated Figure 14.9: “Prevalence of Self-Reported Adult Obesity in the United States, 2018”
- Updated Figure 14.11: “Increase in Cost of Health Care, 1993–2018”
- Revised and updated information on the Affordable Care Act and its implementation throughout the chapter
- Updated Figure 14.13: “Percentage of Children Under the Age of 19 by Without Health Insurance Coverage by Selected Characteristics: 2017 and 2018”
- Updated “Holistic Medicine and Alternative Medicine”
- Revised “Mental Disorders”
- Updated Table 14.2: “Percentage of Noninstitutionalized Adults Age 18 and Older with Disabilities in the United States”
- Updated “Looking Ahead: Health Care in the Future”

CHAPTER 15: Population and Urbanization

- Updated Learning Objectives
- Updated “Sociology & Everyday Life: The Immigration and Deportation Crisis in the United States”
- New Figure 15.1: “Projected Global Population Growth between 2019 and 2050”
- Updated information and statistics on population, fertility, mortality, and migration throughout the chapter
- Revised “Mortality” to include how educational attainment affects life expectancy
- Updated Table 15.1: “The Ten Leading Causes of Death in the United States, 1900 and 2019”
- Updated discussion of “Migration”
- Updated Figure 15.5: “Population Pyramids for Mexico, Iran, the United States, and France, 2020”
- Updated “Sociology in Global Perspective: Global Diaspora and the Migrant Crisis in India and Other Countries”
- Revised “Cities and Persons with a Disability” to include new content on the Americans With Disabilities Act
- Updated Figure 15.14: “The World’s Fifteen Largest Agglomerations”
- Updated “The Continuing Fiscal Crises of the Cities”
- Updated “Looking Ahead: Population and Urbanization in the Future”

CHAPTER 16: Collective Behavior, Social Movements, and Social Change

- Updated Learning Objectives
- Updated the “Sociology & Everyday Life: Collective Behavior, Climate Activism, and Environmental Issues”
- Updated the “Sociology & Everyday Life” quiz: “How Much Do You Know About Collective Behavior and Environmental Issues?”
- Revised “Collective Behavior” to include new Pew Research Center study
- Updated “Conditions for Collective Behavior”

- Revised “Protest Crowds”
- Updated “Convergence Theory” to include climate activists
- Updated “Emergent Norm Theory” to include new content about crimes committed in disaster areas
- Updated “Rumors and Gossip”
- Revised Table 16.1: “Top 6 Problems and Policy Priorities of the U.S. Public, 2019”
- Updated Table 16.1, “Public Opinion”
- Updated “Revolutionary Movements”
- Updated “Religious Movements” to include people identifying themselves as “nones” on Pew Research Surveys
- Updated “Sociology in Global Perspective; “Change Does Occur: Activist Cleans Up Environmental Pollution at Some Chinese Factories”
- Updated “Political Opportunity Theory”
- Revised “New Social Movement Theory” to include climate change activism
- Updated “The Physical Environment and Change”
- Revised and updated “Social Institutions and Change”

Overview of the Text’s Contents

Sociology in Our Times: The Essentials, twelfth edition, contains sixteen high-interest, up-to-date, clearly organized chapters to introduce students to the best of sociological thinking. The length of the text makes full coverage of the book possible in the time typically allocated to the introductory course so that all students are purchasing a book that their instructors will have the time and desire to cover in its entirety.

Sociology in Our Times: The Essentials is divided into five parts.

Part 1 establishes the foundation for studying society and social life. **Chapter 1** introduces students to the sociological imagination and traces the development of sociological thinking. The chapter sets forth the major theoretical perspectives used by sociologists in analyzing compelling social issues and shows students how sociologists conduct research. This chapter provides a thorough description of both quantitative and qualitative methods of sociological research, and shows how these approaches have been used from the era of Emile Durkheim to the present to study social concerns such as suicide. In **Chapter 2** culture is spotlighted as either a stabilizing force or a force that can generate discord, conflict, and even violence in societies. Cultural diversity is discussed as a contemporary issue, and unique coverage is given to popular culture and leisure and to divergent perspectives on popular culture. **Chapter 3** looks at the positive and negative aspects of socialization, including a lived experience of learning the socialization cues of medical school. This chapter presents an innovative analysis of gender and racial–ethnic socialization and issues associated with recent immigration.

Part 2 examines social groups and social control. **Chapter 4** applies the sociological imagination to an examination of society, social structure, and social interaction, using homelessness as a sustained example of the dynamic interplay of structure and interaction in society. Unique to this chapter are discussions of the sociology of emotions and of personal space as viewed through the lenses of race, class, gender, and age.

Chapter 5 analyzes groups and organizations, including innovative forms of social organization and ways in which organizational structures may differentially affect people based on race, class, gender, and age. **Chapter 6** examines how deviance and crime emerge in societies, using diverse theoretical approaches to describe the nature of deviance, crime, and the criminal justice system. Key issues are dramatized for students through an analysis of recent mass shootings and the consequences of violence on individuals and society.

Part 3 focuses on social differences and social inequality, looking at issues of class, race/ethnicity, and sex/gender, while also touching on issues relating to social inequality based on age. **Chapter 7** focuses on class and stratification in the United States, analyzing the causes and consequences of inequality and poverty, including a discussion of the ideology and accessibility of the American Dream. **Chapter 8** addresses the issue of global stratification and examines differences in wealth and poverty in rich and poor nations around the world. Explanations for these differences are discussed.

The focus of **Chapter 9** is race and ethnicity, including an illustration of the historical relationship (or lack of it) between sports and upward mobility by persons from diverse racial–ethnic groups. A thorough analysis of prejudice, discrimination, theoretical perspectives, and the experiences of diverse racial and ethnic groups is presented, along with global racial and ethnic issues. **Chapter 10** examines sex, gender, and sexuality, with special emphasis on gender stratification in historical perspective. Linkages between gender socialization and contemporary gender inequality are described and illustrated by lived experiences and perspectives on body image.

Part 4 offers a systematic discussion of social institutions, building students’ awareness of the importance of these foundational elements of society and showing how a problem in one often has a significant influence on others. Families and intimate relationships are explored in **Chapter 11**, which includes both U.S. and global perspectives on family relationships, a view of families throughout the life course, and a discussion of diversity in contemporary U.S. families. Education and religion are presented in **Chapter 12**, which highlights important sociological theories pertaining to these social institutions and integrates the theme of the influence of religion on education and life. In the process, the chapter highlights issues of race, class, and gender inequalities in current U.S. education. The chapter also provides a thorough discussion of religion in global perspective, including a survey of world

religions and an analysis of how religious beliefs affect other aspects of social life. Current trends in U.S. religion are explored, including various sociological explanations of why people look to religion to find purpose and meaning in life.

Chapter 13 discusses the intertwining nature of politics, economy, and media in global perspective, highlighting the international context in which contemporary political and economic systems operate. The chapter emphasizes the part that social media are increasingly playing in politics and the economy throughout the world.

Chapter 14 analyzes health, health care, and disability from both U.S. and global perspectives. Among the topics included are social epidemiology, lifestyle factors influencing health and illness, health care organization in the United States and other nations, social implications of advanced medical technology, and holistic and alternative medicine. This chapter is unique in that it contains a thorough discussion of the sociological perspectives on disability and of social inequalities based on disability. The Affordable Care Act and its ramifications are explored in detail.

Part 5 surveys social dynamics and social change. **Chapter 15** examines population and urbanization, looking at demography, global population change, and the process and consequences of urbanization. Special attention is given to race- and class-based segregation in urban areas and the crisis in health care in central cities. **Chapter 16** concludes the text with an innovative analysis of collective behavior, social movements, and social change. The need for persistence in social movements, such as the continuing work of environmental activists over the past sixty years, is used as an example to help students grasp the importance of collective behavior and social movements in producing social change.

Distinctive, Classroom-Tested Features

The following special features are specifically designed to demonstrate the relevance of sociology in our lives, as well as to support students' learning. As the preceding overview of the book's contents shows, these features appear throughout the text, some in every chapter and others in selected chapters.

Unparalleled Coverage of and Attention to Diversity

From its first edition, I have strived to integrate diversity in numerous ways throughout this book. The individuals portrayed and discussed in each chapter accurately mirror the diversity in society itself. As a result, this text speaks to a wide variety of students and captures their interest by taking into account their concerns and perspectives. Moreover, the research used includes the best work of classical and established contemporary sociologists—including many white women and people of color—and it weaves an inclusive treatment of *all* people into the examination of sociology in *all* chapters. Therefore, this text helps students

consider the significance of the interlocking nature of individuals' class, race, and gender (and, increasingly, age) in all aspects of social life.

Personal Narratives That Highlight Issues and Serve as Chapter-Length Examples

Authentic first-person commentaries appear in the “Sociology & Everyday Life” features that open each chapter and personalize the issue that unifies the chapter's coverage. These lived experiences provide opportunities for students to examine social life beyond their own experiences and for instructors to systematically incorporate into lectures and discussions an array of interesting and relevant topics that help demonstrate to students the value of applying sociology to their everyday lives. Topics include “Does Social Structure Contribute to Homelessness?,” which discusses sociologist Matthew Desmond's touching book, *Evicted: Poverty and Profit in the American City*, describing the plight of people living in some of the poorest neighborhoods in the United States (Chapter 4); updated research by sociologist Sherry Turkle on “Social Media in the Classroom and the Real World” (Chapter 5); a discussion of gun violence during the Trump administration in “The Carnage from Mass Shootings Just Keeps Going On” (Chapter 6); “The Endless Controversy in Schools,” new lived experiences about how people argue over issues pertaining to the teaching of creationism and evolution in public schools (Chapter 12); “The Immigration and Deportation Crisis in the United States,” with new lived experiences and information about immigration and population problems affecting the United States (Chapter 15); and “Collective Behavior, Climate Activism, and Environmental Issues,” which describes the role of young activists in calling attention to climate change and the environmental crisis (Chapter 16).

Focus on the Relationship Between Sociology and Everyday Life

Each chapter has a brief quiz in the opening “Sociology & Everyday Life” feature that relates the sociological perspective to the pressing social issues presented in the vignette. (Answers are provided at the end of the chapter.)

Emphasis on the Importance of a Global Perspective

The global implications of all topics are examined throughout each chapter and in the “Sociology in Global Perspective” features, which highlight our interconnected world and reveal how the sociological imagination extends beyond national borders.

Emphasis on Social and Global Change

The twelfth edition also strives to relate the importance of social and global change in its many forms and how this change affects not only our everyday lives but also our communities and the entire nation and world.

Applying the Sociological Imagination to Social Policy

The “Sociology & Social Policy” features in selected chapters help students understand the connection between law and social policy issues in society.

Focus on Making a Difference

Designed to help students learn how to become involved in their communities, the “You Can Make a Difference” features look at ways in which students can address, on a personal level, social issues and problems raised by the chapter themes.

Effective Study Aids

In addition to basic reading and study aids such as learning objectives, key terms, and a running glossary, *Sociology in Our Times* includes the following pedagogical aids to aid students’ mastery of the course’s content:

- **Concept Quick Review.** These tables categorize and contrast the major theories or perspectives on the specific topics presented in a chapter.
- **Questions for Critical Thinking.** Each chapter concludes with a set of questions to encourage students to reflect on important issues, to develop their own critical-thinking skills, and to highlight how ideas presented in one chapter often build on those developed previously.
- **Feature-Concluding Reflect & Analyze Questions.** From activating prior knowledge related to concepts and themes to highlighting main ideas and reinforcing diverse perspectives, this text’s questions encourage students to reflect on issues and to analyze content rather than to simply memorize and recall course content.
- **End-of-Chapter Summaries in Question-and-Answer Format.** Chapter summaries provide a built-in review for students by reexamining material covered in the chapter in an easy-to-read question-and-answer format to review, highlight, and reinforce the most important concepts and issues discussed in each chapter.

Comprehensive Supplements Package

Products for Blended and Online Courses

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I invite you to send your comments and suggestions about this book to me in care of:

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Dr. Kendall received her Ph.D. from the University of Texas at Austin, where she was invited to membership in the Phi Kappa Phi Honor Society. Her areas of specialization and primary research interests are sociological theory and the sociology of medicine. Dr. Kendall is the author of *Sociology in Our Times* (Cengage Learning, 2017), *Sociology in Our Times: The Essentials* (Cengage, 2018), *Social Problems in a Diverse Society* (Pearson, 2019), *The Power of Good Deeds: Privileged Women and the Social Reproduction of the Upper Class* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2002), *Members Only: Elite Clubs and the Process of Exclusion* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2008), and *Framing Class: Media Representations of Wealth and Poverty in America*, Second Edition (Rowman & Littlefield, 2012). Much of Dr. Kendall's research focuses on the intersectionality of race, class, and gender, including her publication "Class: Still Alive and Reproducing in the United States," a book chapter in *Privilege: A Reader*, Fourth Edition, 2016, edited by Michael S. Kimmel and Abby L. Ferber and published by Westview Press. Dr. Kendall is also the author of the forthcoming book, *Rich Woman, Poor Woman: The Plight of Women during the Trump Era*, and she is a coauthor of the recently published scholarly publication, "Religious Conservatives and TV News: Are They More Likely to be Religiously Offended?" *Social Problems*, November, 2019 (with coauthors Robert Thomson and Jerry Z. Park). Dr. Kendall is actively involved in numerous national and regional sociological associations, including the American Sociological Association, the Society for the Study of Social Problems, and the Southwestern Sociological Association.





The Sociological Perspective and Research Process

1

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- 1 Discuss** how sociology can contribute to our understanding of social life.
- 2 Explain** the sociological imagination and importance of a global sociological imagination.
- 3 Describe** the historical context in which sociological thinking developed, emphasizing the ideas of early social thinkers.
- 4 Discuss** how the views of Karl Marx, Max Weber, and Georg Simmel on social change influenced modern sociology.
- 5 Compare** the functionalist, conflict, symbolic interactionist, and postmodern perspectives on social life in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.
- 6 Explain** how sociologists and other social scientists question ordinary assumptions and use specific research methods to find out more about the social world.
- 7 Distinguish** between a quantitative research model and a qualitative research model.
- 8 Describe** survey research and the types of surveys.
- 9 Compare** field research, experiments, and secondary analysis of existing data.
- 10 Discuss** the ethical concerns involved in sociological research and the professional codes that protect research participants.

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SOCIOLOGY & **Everyday Life**

Social Media and the Teen Bullying and Suicide Crisis

"Her actions consisted of starting rumors of the victim having sexually transmitted diseases, vulgar name-calling... and threats to 'expose' personal and sensitive details of the victim's life."

—Statement from a Panama City Beach, Florida, police report describing the law enforcement investigation into a middle-school student's social media account after the suicide death of a 12-year-old young woman who had routinely been cyberbullied by this person and other students at her school (Lynch, 2018).

"A police officer stood outside [her front door], demanding her daughter's phone. A day earlier, [this mother] had spoken at the funeral of her 15-year-old daughter . . . who had committed suicide that week. [The mother] knew little about what caused the teen to take her own life, beyond a strange stream of apologetic Facebook messages from friends chiming from [the daughter's] open laptop." . . . "I don't think [my daughter] thought she could start over . . ."

—A mother describes what happened when Phoenix, Arizona, police officers came to her home late on a Sunday night shortly after her 15-year-old daughter had taken her own life following being raped at a Labor Day party and others had shared a photo of the violent event online (Mensik, 2019).

One of the things that law enforcement officials often do in their investigation after a young person's suicide is to look at the victim's cellphone and social



The tragic loss of many young people to suicide has brought about some new state laws aimed at deterring bullying, cyberbullying, and sexual assault. Shown here, the District Attorney of Santa Clara County, California, introduces "Audrie's Law," named in honor of Audrie Pott, a high school student whose life tragically ended in suicide allegedly linked to bullying and sexual assault.

Suicides committed by young people who have been the victims of cyberbullying deeply touch the lives of their families, friends, and others who have not even met them. Although we will never know the full story of what happened to the young people described earlier, these tragic occurrences bring us to larger sociological questions: Why does anyone commit suicide? Is suicide purely an individual phenomenon, or is it related to our social interactions and the social environment and society in which we live? How have technologies such as smartphones and social media affected our communication—both positively and negatively—with others?

As you are well aware, social media use among teens and college students continues to grow rapidly. You are engulfed by smartphones, tablets, and computers. Instagram, Snapchat, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and other networking sites are all taken for granted. You enjoy the positive effects of social media, but the digital age has also produced some harmful outcomes, particularly when people harass others, cause psychological and physical harm, and sometimes even contribute to suicide because of cyberbullying and other forms of aggressive behavior.

Although suicide may seem like a depressing discussion for starting your study of sociology, I have chosen this topic as a beginning

point because suicide is one of the first social topics that some early sociologists studied. These thinkers believed that identifying the *social causes* of such behavior sets sociology apart from psychology, philosophy, and other areas of inquiry. These early sociologists also wanted to show others how many acts we think of as purely *individual* in nature are also social in their origin and consequences.

In Chapter 1, we examine how sociological theories and research can help all of us to better understand social life, including such seemingly individualistic acts such as attempting or committing suicide. We hope you will see how sociological theory and research methods are used to answer complex questions and give you a chance to wrestle with some of the problems sociologists experience as they study human behavior. Before reading on, please test your knowledge about suicide by taking the "Sociology and Everyday Life" quiz. ●

Putting Social Life into Perspective

Sociology is the systematic study of human society and social interaction. It is a *systematic* study because sociologists apply both theoretical perspectives and research methods

media accounts, as well as all other persons who might have cyberbullied or otherwise threatened their well-being. This approach is one way to learn about possible motivations for the individual's death because social media is a prime way in which today's young people may be psychologically harmed by friends

or acquaintances who can anonymously verbally attack them. Cyberbullying as a social phenomenon contributes to problems of depression, anxiety, low self-esteem, and a general feeling of helplessness that may make some young people feel like living is not worthwhile.

How Much Do You Know About Suicide?

TRUE	FALSE	
T	F	1 Suicide primarily occurs in high-income nations of the world.
T	F	2 Suicide is the tenth leading cause of death overall in the United States.
T	F	3 More than twice as many suicides occur in the United States each year as there are homicides.
T	F	4 Although females are more likely to attempt suicide, males are more likely to complete suicide (take their own life).
T	F	5 Each year about 500,000 suicide deaths occur worldwide.
T	F	6 Firearms are the most commonly used method of suicide among males and females.
T	F	7 Among males, the U.S. suicide rate is highest for men aged 65 and older.
T	F	8 The prevalence of suicide attempts typically is highest each year among adults between the ages of 18 and 25.

Answers can be found at the end of the chapter.

(or orderly approaches) to examinations of social behavior. Sociologists study human societies and their social interactions to develop theories of how human behavior is shaped by group life and how, in turn, group life is affected by individuals. Sociologists often examine social institutions and social relationships among people. This helps us understand how the social institutions and larger societal structures, such as government, religion, education, health care, and law, influence our lives and the groups of which we are a part on a daily basis.

Why Should You Study Sociology?

Sociology helps you gain a better understanding of yourself and other people, cultures, and environments we encounter in our larger social world. It enables you to see how the groups to which you belong and the society in which you live largely shape behavior. A **society** is a large social grouping that shares the same geographical territory and is subject to the same political authority and dominant cultural expectations,

such as the United States, Mexico, or Nigeria. Many rapid changes continue to occur in the twenty-first century. Many societies have not only dominant cultural groupings and expectations but also many smaller groupings that have their own unique cultural identities. Global migration and interdependence of various nation-states have shifted the meaning of *society* in the twenty-first century where we tend to look at issues on a more international basis.

Examining the world order helps us understand that each of us is affected by *global interdependence*—a relationship in which the lives of all people are closely intertwined and any one nation's problems are part of a larger global problem. Environmental problems are an example: People throughout

sociology

the systematic study of human society and social interaction.

society

a large social grouping that shares the same geographical territory and is subject to the same political authority and dominant cultural expectations.



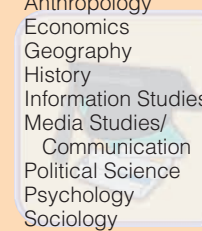
Health and Human Services	Business	Communication	Academia	Law
 Counseling Education Medicine Nursing Social Work	 Advertising Labor Relations Management Marketing	 Broadcasting Public Relations Journalism	 Anthropology Economics Geography History Information Studies Media Studies/ Communication Political Science Psychology Sociology	 Law Criminal Justice

FIGURE 1.1 Fields That Use Social Science Research

In many careers, including jobs in health and human services, business, communication, academia, and law, the ability to analyze social science research is an important need.

Source: Based on Katzer, Cook, and Crouch, 1991.

the world share the same biosphere. When environmental degradation, such as removing natural resources or polluting the air and water, takes place in one region, it may have an adverse effect on people around the globe. Consider, for example, the effects of the recent forest fires in the Amazon rainforest in Brazil, which produces an estimated 20 percent of the world's oxygen. Devastation from these fires will affect regions worldwide with regard to wildlife, natural resources, health, and our oxygen supply. In addition to affecting the global ecosystem, disasters such as this will also deeply affect not only the indigenous people who live in the area but also the health and well-being of individuals worldwide.

What are some ways that you might personally benefit from studying sociology? You can benefit from studying sociology because sociology enables us to move beyond established ways of thinking and allows us to gain new insights into ourselves. It also helps us develop a greater awareness of the connections between our own personal “world” and that of other people. According to sociologist Peter Berger (1963: 23), sociological inquiry helps us see that “things are not what they seem.” Sociology provides new ways of approaching social problems and making decisions in everyday life. For this reason, people with knowledge of sociology are employed in a variety of fields that apply sociological insights to everyday life (see ■ Figure 1.1).

Sociology promotes understanding and tolerance by enabling each of us to look beyond intuition, common sense, and our personal experiences. Many of us rely on intuition or common sense gained from personal experience to help us understand our daily lives and other people's behavior. *Commonsense knowledge* guides ordinary conduct in everyday life. However, many commonsense notions are actually myths. A *myth* is a popular but false notion that may be used, either intentionally or unintentionally, to perpetuate certain beliefs or “theories” even in the light of conclusive evidence to the contrary.

By contrast, sociologists strive to use scientific standards, not popular myths or hearsay, in studying society and social interaction. They use systematic research techniques

and are accountable to the scientific community for their methods and the presentation of their findings. Whereas some sociologists argue that sociology must be completely value free—free from distorting subjective (personal or emotional) bias—others do not think that total objectivity is an attainable or desirable goal when studying human behavior. However, all sociologists attempt to discover patterns or commonalities in human behavior. When they study suicide, for example, they look for recurring patterns of behavior in individuals and groups. Consequently, we seek the multiple causes and effects of social issues and analyze the effect of the problem not only from the standpoint of the people directly involved but also from the standpoint of the effects of such behavior on all people.

The Sociological Imagination

Do you wonder how your daily life compares to what other people are doing? Our interest in Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and other social media sites reflects how fascinated we are by what other people are thinking and doing. But how can you really link your personal life with what is going on with other people in the larger social world? You can make an important linkage known as the sociological imagination.

Sociological reasoning is often referred to as the *sociological imagination*—the ability to see the relationship between individual experiences and the larger society (Mills, 1959b). The sociological imagination is important to each of us because having this awareness enables us to understand the link between our personal experiences and the social contexts in which they occur. Think for a minute about some of the problems you face. Are these problems totally individualistic in nature or do they have their roots in the larger society? What about the high cost of college and university education? At a personal level, you and your family are the ones who have to figure out how to meet these economic demands and sometimes financial hardships caused by the cost of your education. However, what you must pay to attend college and how the costs of your overall education

SOCIOLOGY IN **Global Perspective**

Durkheim's Classical Study of Suicide Applied to Twenty-First-Century India

The bond attaching [people] to life slackens because the bond which attaches [them] to society is itself slack.
—Emile Durkheim, *Suicide* (1964b/1897)

Although this statement described social conditions accompanying the high rates of suicide found in late-nineteenth-century France, Durkheim's words ring true today as we look at contemporary suicide rates for young people in India. The suicide rate among young people aged 15–29 is more than three times the national average for all suicides. Ironically, these rates are high among persons living in the wealthier and more educated regions of the nation (*Times of India*, 2019).

Doesn't this seem unlikely? Many people think rural farmers facing poor harvests and high debt would have the greatest risk of suicide; however, this has not proven true in India. At first glance, we might think that economic success and a good education would provide insurance against suicide because of the greater happiness and job satisfaction among individuals in cities such as New Delhi, as



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Durkheim's words about suicide still ring true today in India, where suicide rates for young people in cities such as New Delhi are high, particularly among those in the 15–29 age category. Why might an economic boom not only create new opportunities but also intensify social problems such as high rates of suicide when social change is linked to rapid urbanization and weakening social ties?

these individuals have gained new opportunities and higher salaries in recent years. However, this economic boom—including the more open markets of India in the twenty-first century—has not only created new opportunities for people; but these changes have also contributed to rapid urbanization and weakened social ties.

The result of all this change? Intensified job anxiety, higher expectations, and more pressure for individual achievement. Social bonds have been weakened or dissolved as people move away from their families and their community. Ironically, newer technologies such as cellphones and social networking sites have contributed to the breakdown of traditional family units as communication has become more impersonal and fragmented.

In addition, life in the cities moves at a much faster pace than in the rural areas, and many individuals experience loneliness, sleep disorders, family discord, and major health risks such as heart disease and depression. In fact, Durkheim's sociology of suicide remains highly relevant to finding new answers to the question of why there is such a rash of suicides among young people in urban areas and villages of India. In India and globally, concern about reducing high rates of suicide is often linked to diagnosis and treatment of mental illness. However, social analysts also have learned that in addition to medications and psychiatric care, human contact with other individuals through suicide hotlines or personal encounters where people have someone available to talk with them may be able to curb more suicidal thoughts and suicide attempts (*Times of India*, 2019). What do you think?

Reflect & Analyze

How does sociology help us examine seemingly private acts such as suicide within a larger social context? Why are some people more inclined to commit suicide if they are not part of a strong social fabric and have, at the same time, high job anxiety and intensive pressure to achieve?

are funded (through savings, part-time jobs, family contributions, grants, scholarships, or other economic means) are embedded in the larger structures of higher education and the politics and economics of our larger society.

The sociological imagination will enable you to grasp the relationship between economic and social arrangements, such as the cost of higher education, at the societal

sociological imagination

C. Wright Mills's term for the ability to see the relationship between individual experiences and the larger society.

level and your own biography at the individual level. This way of looking at social life also helps you distinguish between personal troubles and social (or public) issues. *Personal troubles* are private problems that affect individuals and the networks of people with whom they regularly associate. As a result, individuals within their immediate social settings must solve those problems. For example, one person being unable to afford a college education or being unemployed may be viewed by some other people as a personal trouble. But, by contrast, *public issues* are problems that affect large numbers of people and often require solutions at the societal level. To pay for a college education, many students must rely on loans that may follow them many years after college. Some estimates suggest that more than 44 million people in the United States have a combined total of more than \$1.4 trillion in student debt. This is a societal problem, not just an individual one!

The sociological imagination helps us place seemingly personal troubles, such as having difficulty paying for a college education, losing one's job, or thinking about taking one's own life (referred to as "suicidal ideation"), into a larger social context, where we can distinguish whether and how personal troubles may be related to public issues. Let's compare the two perspectives by looking at suicide.

Suicide as a Personal Trouble Have you ever heard someone say, "They have no one to blame but themselves" regarding some problem? In everyday life, we often blame other people for "creating" their own problems. Although individual behavior can contribute to social problems, our individual experiences are often largely beyond our own control. They are determined by society as a whole—by its historical development and its organization. In everyday life, we often blame individuals for creating or contributing to their own problems. If a person commits suicide, many people consider it to be strictly the result of that individual's own personal problems, not the social world in which the person lived.

Suicide as a Public Issue Using the sociological imagination to look at the problem of suicide, we can see that it is often a public issue—a societal problem. Early sociologist Emile Durkheim refused to accept popular explanations of suicide. In what is probably the first sociological study to use scientific research methods, he related suicide to the issue of cohesiveness (or lack of it) in society instead of viewing suicide as an isolated act that could be understood only by studying individual personalities or inherited tendencies. In *Suicide* (1964b/1897), Durkheim documented his contention that a high suicide rate indicated large-scale societal problems.

The Importance of a Global Sociological Imagination

How is it possible to think globally when you live in one location and have been taught to think a certain way? Although we live in one country and rely heavily on Western

sociological theory and research, we can access the world beyond the United States and learn to develop a more comprehensive *global* approach for the future. One way we can do this is to reach beyond studies that have focused primarily on the United States to look at the important challenges we face in a rapidly changing world and develop a more comprehensive *global* approach for the future (see ■ Figure 1.2). These issues range from political and economic instability to environmental concerns, natural disasters, and terrorism. We can also examine the ways in which nations are not on equal footing when it comes to economics and politics.

The world's *high-income countries* are nations with highly industrialized economies; technologically advanced industrial, administrative, and service occupations; and relatively high levels of national and personal income. Examples include the United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Japan, and the countries of Western Europe.

As compared with other nations of the world, many high-income nations have a high standard of living and a lower death rate because of advances in nutrition and medical technology. However, not everyone living in a so-called high-income country has these advantages.

In contrast, *middle-income countries* are nations with industrializing economies, particularly in urban areas, and moderate levels of national and personal income. Examples of middle-income countries include the nations of Eastern Europe and many Latin American countries.

Low-income countries are primarily agrarian nations with little industrialization and low levels of national and personal income. Examples of low-income countries include many of the nations of Africa and Asia, particularly India and the People's Republic of China, where people typically work the land and are among the poorest in the world. However, generalizations are difficult to make because there are wide differences in income and standards of living within many nations (see Chapter 8).

If we look at the problem of suicide from a global perspective, we find that it is a major concern: Worldwide, more than 800,000 people die by suicide every year. In addition, many more people attempt suicide. Based on what you have read earlier about high-, middle-, and low-income countries, it is important for us to think about the fact that about 79 percent of global suicides occur in low- and middle-income countries. Risk factors are shown in ■ Figure 1.3.

Throughout this text, we will continue to develop our sociological imaginations by examining social life in the United States and other nations. The future of our nation is deeply intertwined with the future of all other nations of the world on economic, political, environmental, and humanitarian levels.

Whatever your race/ethnicity, class, sex, or age, are you able to include in your thinking the perspectives of people who are quite different from you in experiences and points of view? Before you answer this question, a few definitions are in order. *Race* is a term used by many people to specify groups of people distinguished by physical characteristics



FIGURE 1.2 The World's Economies in the Early Twenty-First Century
High-, middle-, and low-income countries.

Photos, left to right: John Berry/Syracuse Newspapers/The Image Works; Gable/Alamy Stock Photo; Philipbigg/Alamy Stock Photo

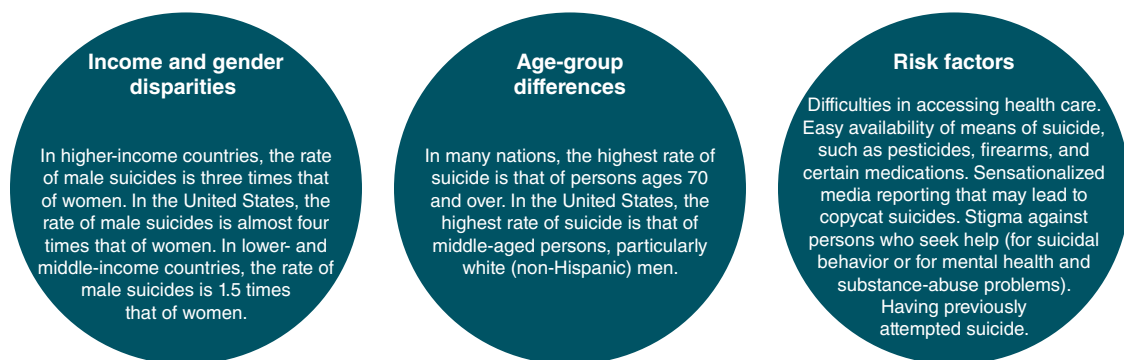


FIGURE 1.3 Using Our Global Sociological Imagination to Understand Suicide

Sources: U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2015a; World Health Organization, 2015a.

such as skin color. *Ethnicity* refers to the cultural heritage or identity of a group and is based on factors such as language or country of origin. *Class* is the relative location of a person or group within the larger society, based on wealth, power, prestige, or other valued resources. *Sex* refers to the biological and anatomical differences between females and males. By contrast, *gender* refers to social and/or cultural distinctions associated with being male or female. Historically,

high-income countries

nations with highly industrialized economies; technologically advanced industrial, administrative, and service occupations; and relatively high levels of national and personal income.

middle-income countries

nations with industrializing economies, particularly in urban areas, and moderate levels of national and personal income.



Everett Collection/Newscom

FIGURE 1.4 As the Industrial Revolution swept through the United States beginning in the nineteenth century, children employed in factories became increasingly common. Social thinkers soon began to explore such new social problems brought about by industrialization.

gender has referred to the meanings, beliefs, and practices associated with sex differences, often thought of as *femininity* and *masculinity*. More recently, the meanings associated with gender have become much more flexible, as discussed in Chapter 10. Although terms such as masculinity and femininity sound precise, they do not have a precise meaning and are, instead, *social constructions* that people often use to justify social differences and inequalities. When we refer to something as a “social construction,” we mean that race, ethnicity, class, and gender do not really indicate anything apart from the social meaning that people in a given society confer on them. However, the result is that we may—either intentionally or unintentionally—privilege some categories of people over others who are relegated to disadvantaged or subordinate positions in society. In sum, a “social construction of reality” occurs when large numbers of people act and respond as if these categories exist in reality rather than having been socially created by others.

The Development of Sociological Thinking

Where did sociological thinking come from? Throughout history, social philosophers and religious authorities have made countless observations about human behavior. However, the idea of observing how people lived, finding out what they thought, and doing so in a systematic manner that could be verified did not take hold until the nineteenth century and the social upheaval brought about by industrialization and urbanization.

Industrialization is the process by which societies are transformed from dependence on agriculture and hand-made products to an emphasis on manufacturing and related industries. This process occurred first during the Industrial Revolution in Britain between 1760 and 1850,

and was soon repeated throughout Western Europe. By the mid-nineteenth century, industrialization was well under way in the United States. Massive economic, technological, and social changes occurred as machine technology and the factory system shifted the economic base of these nations from agriculture to manufacturing: textiles, iron smelting, and related industries. Many people who had labored on the land were forced to leave their tightly knit rural communities and sacrifice well-defined social relationships to seek employment as factory workers in the emerging cities, which became the centers of industrial work.

Urbanization is the process by which an increasing proportion of a population lives in cities rather than in rural areas. Although cities existed long before the Industrial Revolution, the development of the factory system led to a rapid increase in both the number of cities and the size of their populations. People from very diverse backgrounds worked together in the same factory (see ■ Figure 1.4). At the same time, many people shifted from being *producers* to being *consumers*. For example, families living in the cities had to buy food with their wages because they could no longer grow their own crops to eat or barter for other resources. Similarly, people had to pay rent for their lodging because they could no longer exchange their services for shelter.

These living and working conditions led to the development of new social problems: inadequate housing, crowding, unsanitary conditions, poverty, pollution, and crime. Wages were so low that entire families—including very young children—were forced to work, often under hazardous conditions and with no job security. As these conditions became more visible, a new breed of social thinkers tried to understand why and how society was changing.

The Origins of Sociology as We Know It

At the same time that urban problems were growing worse, natural scientists had been using reason, or rational thinking, to discover the laws of physics and the movement of the planets. Social thinkers started to believe that by applying the methods developed by the natural sciences, they might discover the laws of human behavior and apply these laws to solve social problems. Historically, the time was ripe because the Age of Enlightenment had produced a belief in reason and humanity’s ability to perfect itself.

Early Thinkers: A Concern with Social Order and Stability

Early social thinkers—such as Auguste Comte, Harriet Martineau, Herbert Spencer, and Emile Durkheim—were interested in analyzing social order and stability, and many of their ideas have had a dramatic and long-lasting influence on modern sociology.

Auguste Comte The French philosopher Auguste Comte (1798–1857) coined the term *sociology* from the Latin *socius* (“social, being with others”) and the Greek *logos* (“study of”) to describe a new science that would engage in the study of society. Even though he never actually conducted sociological research, Comte is considered by some to be the “founder of sociology.” Comte’s theory that societies contain *social statics* (forces for social order and stability) and *social dynamics* (forces for conflict and change) has been used throughout the history of sociology.



Auguste Comte (1798–1857) (oil on canvas), Etex, Louis Jules (1810–1889)/Temple de la Religion de l’Humanité, Paris, France/The Bridgeman Art Library

Comte stressed that the methods of the natural sciences should be applied to the objective study of society. His philosophy became known as **positivism**—a belief that the world can best be understood through scientific inquiry. He believed that positivism had two dimensions: (1) methodological—the application of scientific knowledge to both physical and social phenomena, and (2) social and political—the use of such knowledge to predict the likely results of different policies so that the best one might be chosen.

Today, sociology is recognized as a STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) field that is actively involved in the American Academy for the Advancement of Science, the largest general science organization worldwide. Sociology is also a core part of what we refer to as “applied science” and has been incorporated into the MCAT (Medical College Admissions Test), an exam that includes questions on basic sociology as well as other medically related sciences (Hillsman, 2015). The advocacy of Comte and other early social thinkers about the scientific contributions of sociology continues into the twenty-first century, many years beyond their initial endeavors.

Harriet Martineau Comte’s works were made more accessible for a wide variety of scholars through the efforts of the British sociologist Harriet Martineau (1802–1876). Until fairly recently, Martineau received no recognition in the field of sociology, partly because she was a woman in a male-dominated discipline and society. Not only did she translate and condense Comte’s works, but she was also an active sociologist in her own right. Martineau studied the social customs of Britain and the United States, analyzing the consequences of industrialization and capitalism. In *Society in America* (1962/1837), she examined religion, politics, child rearing,



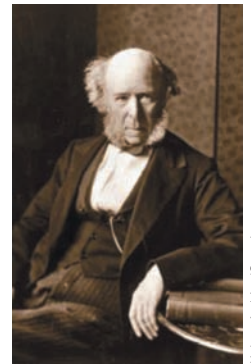
Spencer Arnold/Hulton Archive/Getty Images

slavery, and immigration, paying special attention to social distinctions based on class, race, and gender. Her works explore the status of women, children, and “sufferers” (persons who are considered to be criminal, mentally ill, handicapped, poor, or alcoholic).

Martineau was an advocate of social change, encouraging greater racial and gender equality. She was also committed to creating a science of society that would be grounded in empirical observations and widely accessible to people. She argued that sociologists should be impartial in their assessment of society but that it is entirely appropriate to compare the existing state of society with the principles on which it was founded. Martineau believed that a better society would emerge if women and men were treated equally, enlightened reform occurred, and cooperation existed among people in all social classes (but led by the middle class).

Herbert Spencer Unlike Comte, who was strongly influenced by the upheavals of the French Revolution, the British social theorist Herbert Spencer (1820–1903) was born in a more peaceful and optimistic period in his country’s history. Spencer’s major contribution to sociology was an evolutionary perspective on social order and social change. Evolutionary theory helps to explain how organic and/or social change occurs in societies. According to Spencer’s Theory of General Evolution, society, like a biological organism, has various interdependent parts (such as the family, the economy, and the government) that work to ensure the stability and survival of the entire society.

Spencer believed that societies develop through a process of “struggle” (for existence) and “fitness” (for survival), which he referred to as the “survival of the fittest.” Because this phrase is often attributed to Charles Darwin, Spencer’s view of society is known as **social Darwinism**—the



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low-income countries

primarily agrarian nations with little industrialization and low levels of national and personal income.

industrialization

the process by which societies are transformed from dependence on agriculture and handmade products to an emphasis on manufacturing and related industries.

urbanization

the process by which an increasing proportion of a population lives in cities rather than in rural areas.

positivism

a belief that the world can best be understood through scientific inquiry.

social Darwinism

Herbert Spencer’s belief that those species of animals, including human beings, best adapted to their environment survive and prosper, whereas those poorly adapted die out.

belief that those species of animals, including human beings, best adapted to their environment survive and prosper, whereas those poorly adapted die out. Spencer equated this process of *natural selection* with progress because only the “fittest” members of society would survive the competition.

Critics believe that Spencer’s ideas are flawed because societies are not the same as biological systems; people are able to create and transform the environment in which they live. Moreover, the notion of the survival of the fittest can easily be used to justify class, racial–ethnic, and gender inequalities.

Emile Durkheim French sociologist Emile Durkheim (1858–1917) stressed that people are the product of their social environment and that behavior cannot be understood fully in terms of *individual*, biological, and psychological traits. He believed that the limits of human potential are *socially* based, not *biologically* based.



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In his work *The Rules of Sociological Method* (1964a/1895), Durkheim set forth one of his most important contributions to sociology: the idea that societies are built on social facts. **Social facts** are patterned ways of acting, thinking, and feeling that exist outside any one individual but that exert social control over each person. Durkheim believed that social facts must be explained by other social facts—by reference to the social structure rather than to individual attributes.

Durkheim observed that rapid social change and a more specialized division of labor produce *strains* in society. These strains lead to a breakdown in traditional organization, values, and authority, and to a dramatic increase in *anomie*—a condition in which social control becomes ineffective as a result of the loss of shared values and a sense of purpose in society. According to Durkheim, anomie is most likely to occur during a period of rapid social change. In *Suicide* (1964b/1897), he explored the relationship between anomic social conditions and suicide, a concept that remains important in the twenty-first century. For example, studies of high rates of suicide in India have found that young people living in large cities are more prone to suicide than those living in rural areas. Why is this true? Researchers have concluded that social bonds among people, particularly younger individuals, have become weakened or even dissolved after they moved away from their families and communities to find better jobs and earn higher incomes in cities. Are similar problems likely in the United States? Why or why not?

Durkheim’s contributions to sociology are so significant that he is one of the crucial figures in its development as an academic area of study. He is one of the founding figures in the functionalist theoretical tradition, but he also made important contributions to other perspectives, particularly

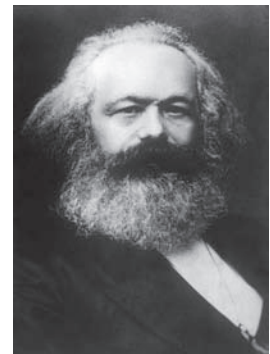
symbolic interactionism. Later in this chapter, we look at these theoretical approaches.

Although critics acknowledge Durkheim’s important contributions, some argue that his emphasis on societal stability, or the “problem of order”—how society can establish and maintain social stability and cohesiveness—obscured the *subjective meanings* that individuals give to religion, work, and suicide. From this view, overemphasis on *structure* and the determining power of “society” resulted in a corresponding neglect of *agency* (the beliefs and actions of the actors involved) in much of Durkheim’s theorizing.

Differing Views on the Status Quo: Stability or Change?

Together with Karl Marx, Max Weber, and Georg Simmel, Durkheim established the direction of modern sociology. We will look first at Marx’s and Weber’s divergent thoughts about conflict and social change in societies and then at Simmel’s microlevel analysis of society.

Karl Marx In sharp contrast to Durkheim’s focus on the stability of society, German economist and philosopher Karl Marx (1818–1883) stressed that history is a continuous clash between conflicting ideas and forces. He believed that conflict—especially class conflict—is necessary to produce social change and a better society. For Marx, the most important



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changes are economic. He concluded that the capitalist economic system was responsible for the overwhelming poverty that he observed in London at the beginning of the Industrial Revolution (Marx and Engels, 1967/1848).

In the Marxian framework, *class conflict* is the struggle between the capitalist class and the working class. The capitalist class, or *bourgeoisie*, is those who own and control the means of production—the tools, land, factories, and money for investment that form the economic basis of a society. The working class, or *proletariat*, is those who must sell their labor because they have no other means to earn a livelihood. From Marx’s viewpoint, the capitalist class controls and exploits the masses of struggling workers by paying less than the value of their labor. This exploitation results in workers’ *alienation*—a feeling of powerlessness and estrangement from other people and themselves. Marx predicted that the working class would become aware of its exploitation, overthrow the capitalists, and establish a free and classless society.

Marx is regarded as one of the most profound sociological thinkers; however, his social and economic analyses have also inspired heated debates among generations of social scientists. Central to his view was the belief that society should not just be studied but should also be changed, because the status

quo involved the oppression of most of the population by a small group of wealthy people. Those who believe that sociology should be value free (see later) are uncomfortable with Marx's advocacy of what some perceive to be radical social change. As well, scholars who examine society through the lens of race, gender, and class believe that his analysis places too much emphasis on class relations.

Max Weber German social scientist Max Weber (pronounced VAY-ber) (1864–1920) was also concerned about the changes brought about by the Industrial Revolution. Although he disagreed with Marx's idea that economics is *the* central force in social change, Weber acknowledged that economic interests are important in shaping human action. Even so, he thought that economic systems were heavily influenced by other factors in a society.

Unlike many early analysts who believed that values could not be separated from the research process, Weber emphasized that sociology should be *value free*—research should be done scientifically, excluding the researcher's personal values and economic interests. However, Weber realized that social behavior cannot be analyzed by purely objective criteria. Although he recognized that sociologists cannot be totally value free, Weber stressed that they should employ *verstehen* (German for “understanding” or “insight”) to gain the ability to see the world as others see it. In contemporary sociology, Weber's idea is incorporated into the concept of the sociological imagination (discussed earlier in this chapter).

Weber was also concerned that large-scale organizations (bureaucracies) were becoming increasingly oriented toward routine administration and a specialized division of labor, which he believed were destructive to human vitality and freedom. According to Weber, rational bureaucracy, rather than class struggle, is the most significant factor in determining the social relations between people in industrial societies. From this view, bureaucratic domination can be used to maintain powerful (capitalist) interests. As discussed in Chapter 5 (“Groups and Organizations”), Weber's work on bureaucracy has had a far-reaching effect.



Charles Mitchell/Icon Sportswire/Getty Images

FIGURE 1.5 According to sociologist Georg Simmel, society is a web of patterned interactions among people. If we focus on the behavior of individuals only, we miss the underlying forms that make up the “geometry of social life.”



Hulton Archive/staff/Getty Images

Weber also provided important insights on the process of rationalization, bureaucracy, religion, and many other topics. In his writings, Weber was more aware of women's issues than many of the scholars of his day. Perhaps his awareness at least partially resulted from the fact that his wife, Marianne Weber, was an important figure in the women's movement in Germany.

Georg Simmel At about the same time that Durkheim was developing the field of sociology in France, German sociologist Georg Simmel (pronounced ZIM-mel) (1858–1918) was theorizing about the importance of social change in his own country and elsewhere. Simmel was also focusing on how society is a web of patterned interactions among people (■ Figure 1.5). In *The Sociology of Georg Simmel* (1950/1902–1917), he described how social interactions are



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social facts

Emile Durkheim's term for patterned ways of acting, thinking, and feeling that exist outside any one individual but that exert social control over each person.

anomie

Emile Durkheim's term for a condition in which social control becomes ineffective as a result of the loss of shared values and of a sense of purpose in society.

different based on the size of the social group. According to Simmel, interaction patterns differ between a *dyad* (a social group with two members) and a *triad* (a group with three members) because the presence of an additional person often changes the dynamics of communication and the overall interaction process. Simmel also developed *formal sociology*, an approach that focuses attention on the universal social forms that underlie social interaction. He referred to these forms as the “geometry of social life.”

Like the other social thinkers of his day, Simmel analyzed the effect of industrialization and urbanization on people’s lives. He concluded that class conflict was becoming more pronounced in modern industrial societies. He also linked the increase in individualism, as opposed to concern for the group, to the fact that people now had many cross-cutting “social spheres”—membership in a number of organizations and voluntary associations—rather than the singular community ties of the past.

Simmel’s contributions to sociology are significant. He wrote more than thirty books and numerous essays on diverse topics, leading some critics to state that his work is fragmentary and piecemeal. However, his thinking has influenced a wide array of sociologists, including the members of the “Chicago School” in the United States.

The Origins of Sociology in the United States

From Western Europe, sociology spread in the 1890s to the United States, where it thrived as a result of the intellectual climate and the rapid rate of social change. The first departments of sociology in the United States were located at the University of Chicago and at Atlanta University, then an African American school.

The Chicago School The first department of sociology in the United States was established at the University of Chicago, where the faculty was instrumental in starting the American Sociological Society (now known as the American Sociological Association). Robert E. Park (1864–1944), a member of the Chicago faculty, asserted that urbanization has a disintegrating influence on social life by producing an increase in the crime rate and in racial and class antagonisms that contribute to the segregation and isolation of neighborhoods. George Herbert Mead (1863–1931), another member of the faculty at Chicago, founded the symbolic interaction perspective, which is discussed later in this chapter.

Jane Addams Jane Addams (1860–1935) is one of the best-known early women sociologists in the United States because she founded Hull House, one of the most famous settlement houses, in an impoverished area of Chicago. Throughout her career, she was actively engaged in sociological endeavors: She



AP Photo

lectured at numerous colleges, was a charter member of the American Sociological Society, and published a number of articles and books. Addams was one of the authors of *Hull-House Maps and Papers*, a groundbreaking book that used a methodological technique employed by sociologists for the next forty years. She was also awarded a Nobel Prize for her assistance to the underprivileged. In recent years, Addams has received greater recognition from contemporary sociologists because of her role as an early theorist of social change who influenced later feminist theorists and activists.

W. E. B. Du Bois and Atlanta University

The second department of sociology in the United States was founded by W. E. B. Du Bois (1868–1963) at Atlanta University. He created a laboratory of sociology, instituted a program of systematic research, founded and conducted regular sociological conferences on research, founded two journals, and established a record of valuable publications. His classic work, *The Philadelphia Negro: A Social Study* (1967/1899), was based on his research into Philadelphia’s African American community and stressed the strengths and weaknesses of a community wrestling with overwhelming social problems. Du Bois was one of the first scholars to note that a dual heritage creates conflict for people of color. He called this duality *double-consciousness*—the identity conflict of being both a black and an American. Du Bois pointed out that although people in this country espouse such values as democracy, freedom, and equality, they also accept racism and group discrimination. African Americans are the victims of these conflicting values and the actions that result from them. The influence of Du Bois continues to grow in contemporary studies of inequality, social justice, and the need for change in racial/ethnic and class relations in the United States and worldwide.



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Theoretical Perspectives in the Twentieth and Twenty-First Centuries

Given the many and varied ideas and trends that influenced the development of sociology, how do contemporary sociologists view society? Some see it as basically a stable and ongoing entity; others view it in terms of many groups competing for scarce resources; still others describe it based on the everyday, routine interactions among individuals. Each of these views represents a method of examining the same phenomena. Each is based on general ideas about how social life is organized and represents an effort to link specific observations in a meaningful way. Each uses a *theory*—a

set of logically interrelated statements that attempts to describe, explain, and (occasionally) predict social events. Each theory helps interpret reality in a distinct way by providing a framework in which observations may be logically ordered. Sociologists refer to this theoretical framework as a *perspective*—an overall approach to or viewpoint on some subject. Three major theoretical perspectives have been predominant in U.S. sociology in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries: the functionalist, conflict, and symbolic interactionist perspectives. Other perspectives, such as postmodernism, have also emerged and gained acceptance among some social thinkers. Before turning to the specifics of these perspectives, we should note that some theorists and theories do not fit neatly into any of these perspectives. Although the categories may be viewed as oversimplified by some people, most of us organize our thinking into categories and find it easier for us to compare and contrast ideas if we have a basic outline of key characteristics associated with each approach.

Functionalist Perspectives

Also known as *functionalism* and *structural functionalism*, **functionalist perspectives** are based on the assumption that society is a stable, orderly system. This stable system is characterized by *societal consensus*, whereby the majority of members share a common set of values, beliefs, and behavioral expectations. According to this perspective, a society is composed of interrelated parts, each of which serves a function and (ideally) contributes to the overall stability of the society. Societies develop social structures, institutions that persist because they play a part in helping society survive. These institutions include the family, education, government, religion, and the economy. If anything adverse happens to one of these institutions or parts, all other parts are affected, and the system no longer functions properly.

Talcott Parsons and Robert K. Merton

Talcott Parsons (1902–1979), perhaps the most influential contemporary advocate of the functionalist perspective, stressed that all societies must meet social needs to survive. Parsons (1955) suggested, for example, that a division of labor (distinct, specialized functions) between husband and wife is essential for family stability and social order. The husband/father performs the *instrumental tasks*, which involve leadership and decision-making responsibilities in the home and employment outside the home to support the family. The wife/mother is responsible for the *expressive tasks*, including housework, caring for the children, and providing



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emotional support for the entire family. Parsons believed that other institutions, including school, church, and government, must function to assist the family and that all institutions must work together to preserve the system over time (Parsons, 1955).

Functionalism was refined further by Robert K. Merton (pictured; 1910–2003), who distinguished between manifest and latent functions of social institutions. **Manifest functions** are intended and/or overtly recognized by the participants in a social unit. In contrast, **latent functions** are unintended functions that are hidden and remain unacknowledged by participants (■ Figure 1.6). For example, a manifest function of education is the transmission of knowledge and skills from one generation to the next; a latent function is the establishment of social relations and networks. Merton noted that all features of a social system may not be functional at all times; *dysfunctions* are the undesirable consequences of any element of a society. A dysfunction of education in the United States is the perpetuation of gender, racial, and class inequalities. Such dysfunctions may threaten the capacity of a society to adapt and survive.

Applying a Functionalist Perspective to Suicide

Functionalism emphasizes the importance to a society of shared moral values and strong social bonds. It also highlights the significance of social support from others. When rapid social change or other disruptive conditions occur, moral values may erode, and people may become more uncertain about how to act and about whether or not their life has meaning. Social disruption and war are events that produce such feelings of anomie and suicidal ideation—suicidal thoughts or an unusual preoccupation with suicide.

One study that examined the functions of social support in reducing or preventing suicidal ideation in Air Force personnel during U.S. combat operations in Iraq and Afghanistan found that all forms of social support were not equally important in protecting individuals against suicidal thoughts or actions. One form of social support is belonging, or companionship support, where we feel like we belong or fit in with others. Tangible support involves material issues, such as having someone willing to lend money or provide assistance with specific tasks. Appraisal support refers to someone providing useful information that helps us

theory

a set of logically interrelated statements that attempts to describe, explain, and (occasionally) predict social events.

functionalist perspectives

the sociological approach that views society as a stable, orderly system.

manifest functions

functions that are intended and/or overtly recognized by the participants in a social unit.

latent functions

unintended functions that are hidden and remain unacknowledged by participants.



Jeerah Moon/Bloomberg/Getty Images

FIGURE 1.6 Shopping malls are a reflection of a consumer society. A manifest function of a shopping mall is to sell goods and services to shoppers; however, a latent function may be to provide a communal area in which people can visit friends.

evaluate our situation and provide emotional validation for our thoughts and feelings. Esteem support involves having other people show a concern for our well-being or express confidence in us and our ability to overcome the problems we face. Of these four types of social support, the researchers found that esteem support was the most important factor in whether the Air Force personnel in their study had experienced severe suicidal ideation (Bryan and Hernandez, 2013).

Conflict Perspectives

According to *conflict perspectives*, groups in society are engaged in a continuous power struggle for control of scarce resources. Conflict may take the form of politics, litigation, negotiations, or family discussions about financial matters. Simmel, Marx, and Weber contributed significantly to this perspective by focusing on the inevitability of clashes between social groups. Today, advocates of the conflict perspective view social life as a continuous power struggle among competing social groups.

Max Weber and C. Wright Mills As previously discussed, Karl Marx focused on the exploitation and oppression of the proletariat by the bourgeoisie. Max Weber recognized the

importance of economic conditions in producing inequality and conflict in society, but he added *power* and *prestige* as other sources of inequality. Weber (1968/1922) defined *power* as the ability of a person within a social relationship to carry out his or her own will despite resistance from others, and *prestige* as a positive or negative social estimation of honor (Weber, 1968/1922) (■ Figure 1.7).

C. Wright Mills (1916–1962), a key figure in the development of contemporary conflict theory, encouraged sociologists to get involved in social reform. Mills encouraged everyone to look beneath everyday events to observe the major resource and power inequalities that exist in society. He believed that the most important decisions in the United States are made largely behind the scenes by the *power elite*—a small clique of top corporate, political, and military officials. Mills's power elite theory is discussed in Chapter 13.

The conflict perspective is not one unified theory but one with several branches. One branch is the neo-Marxist approach, which views struggle between the classes as inevitable and as a prime source of social change. A second branch focuses on racial–ethnic inequalities and the continued exploitation of members of some racial–ethnic groups. A third branch is the feminist perspective, which focuses on gender issues.

The Feminist Approach

A feminist theoretical approach (or “feminism”) directs attention to women’s experiences and the importance of gender as an element of social structure. This approach is based on a belief in the equality of women and men and the idea that all people should be equally valued and have equal rights. According to feminist theorists, we live in a *patriarchy*, a system in which men dominate women and in which things considered to be “male” or “masculine” are more highly valued than those considered to be “female” or “feminine.” The feminist perspective assumes that gender is socially created and that change is essential for people to achieve their human potential without limits based on gender. Some feminists argue that women’s subordination can end only after the patriarchal system becomes obsolete. However, feminism is not one single, unified approach; there are several feminist perspectives, which are discussed in Chapter 10.

Applying Conflict Perspectives to Suicide

How might we use a conflict approach to explain suicide?

Social Class Although many other factors may be present, social-class pressures may affect rates of suicide among young people from lower-income families when they perceive that they have few educational or employment opportunities and little hope for the future. However, class-based inequality alone cannot explain suicides among young people.

Gender In North America, females are more likely to *attempt* suicide, whereas males are more likely to actually take their own life. Despite the fact that women’s suicidal behavior has traditionally been attributed to problems in their interpersonal relationships, feminist analysts believe that we must examine social structural pressures on young women and how these may contribute to their behavior—for example, cultural assumptions about women and what their multiple roles should be in the family, education, and the workplace.

Race/Ethnicity Racial and ethnic subordination may be a factor in some suicides. (■Figure 1.8 displays age-adjusted



Mike Coppola/Getty Images Entertainment/Getty Images

FIGURE 1.7 As one of the wealthiest and most-beloved entertainers in the world, Oprah Winfrey is an example of Max Weber’s concept of prestige—a positive social estimation of honor.

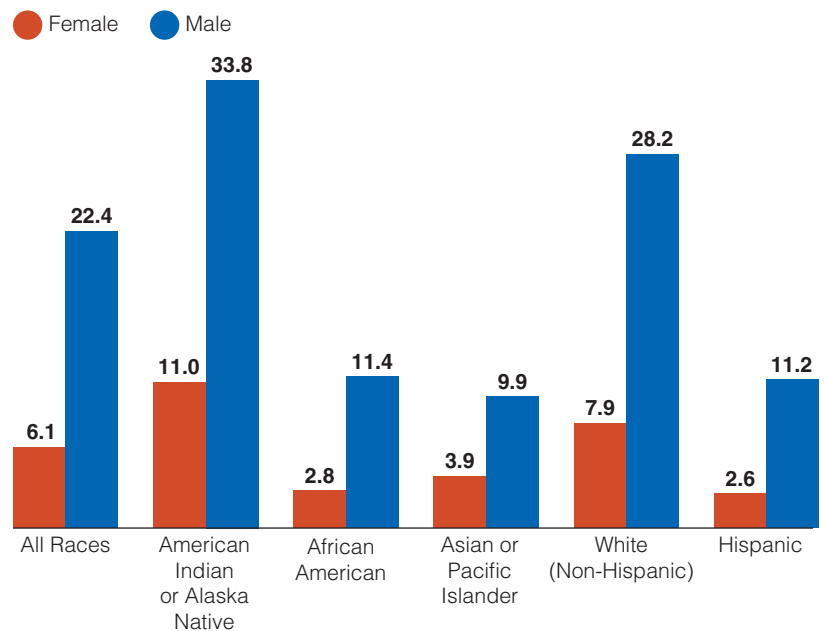


FIGURE 1.8 Age-Adjusted U.S. Suicide Rates by Race and Sex

Source: National Center for Health Statistics, 2019.

Notes: Age-adjusted rates are rates that would have existed if the population under study had the same age distribution as the United States “standard” population.

Rates are for U.S. suicides and indicate the number of deaths by suicide for every 100,000 people by race and sex.

conflict perspectives

the sociological approach that views groups in society as engaged in a continuous power struggle for control of scarce resources.

suicide rates in terms of race and sex.) For example, this fact is reflected in the high rate of suicide among Native Americans and Alaska Natives, who constitute about 2 percent of the U.S. population. On reservations in the northern plains (in states such as North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, Montana, Wyoming, and Utah), parts of the Southwest, and in Alaska, Native American teens and young adults have suicide rates more than three times as high as those for other youths in the United States. Although some research has focused on individualistic reasons why young Native Americans commit suicide, sociologists focus on the effects of social inequalities and racial-ethnic discrimination on suicidal behavior. Many Native American young people reside in homes and communities characterized by extreme poverty, hunger, alcoholism, substance abuse, and family violence.

Symbolic Interactionist Perspectives

The conflict and functionalist perspectives have been criticized for focusing primarily on macrolevel analysis. A **macrolevel analysis** examines whole societies, large-scale social structures, and social systems instead of looking at important social dynamics in individuals' lives. Our third perspective, symbolic interactionism, fills this void by examining people's day-to-day interactions and their behavior in groups. Thus, symbolic interactionist approaches are based on a **microlevel analysis**, which focuses on small groups rather than large-scale social structures.

We can trace the origins of this perspective to the Chicago School, especially George Herbert Mead and the sociologist Herbert Blumer (1900–1986), who is credited with coining the term *symbolic interactionism*. According to **symbolic interactionist perspectives**, society is the sum of the interactions of individuals and groups. Theorists using this perspective focus on the process of *interaction*—defined as immediate reciprocally oriented communication between two or more people—and the part that symbols play in communication. A *symbol* is anything that meaningfully represents something else. Examples include signs, gestures, written language, and shared values. Symbolic interaction occurs when people communicate through the use of symbols—for example, a ring to indicate a couple's engagement. But symbolic communication occurs in a variety of forms, including facial gestures, posture, tone of voice, and other symbolic gestures (such as a handshake or a clenched fist).

Symbols are instrumental in helping people derive meanings from social interactions. In social encounters, each person's interpretation or definition of a given situation becomes a *subjective reality* from that person's viewpoint. We often assume that what we consider to be “reality” is shared by others; however, this assumption is often incorrect. Subjective reality is acquired and shared through agreed-upon symbols, especially language. If a person shouts “Fire!” or “Active Shooter!” in a crowded movie theater, for example, that language produces the same response (attempting to escape) in all of those who hear and understand it. When

people in a group do not share the same meaning for a given symbol, however, confusion results: People who do not know the meaning of the word *fire* or *active shooter* may not immediately know what the commotion is about. How people *interpret* the messages they receive and the situations they encounter becomes their subjective reality and may strongly influence their behavior.

Applying Symbolic Interactionist Perspectives to Suicide Social analysts applying a symbolic interactionist framework to the study of suicide focus on a micro-level analysis of the people's face-to-face interactions and the roles they play in society. We define situations according to our own subjective reality. From this point of view, a suicide attempt may be a way of garnering attention—a call for help—rather than wanting to end one's life. People may attempt to communicate in such desperate ways because other forms of communication have failed.

Postmodern Perspectives

According to **postmodern perspectives**, existing theories have been unsuccessful in explaining social life in contemporary societies characterized by postindustrialization, consumerism, and global communications. Postmodern social theorists reject the theoretical perspectives we have previously discussed, as well as how those theories were created.

Postmodern theories are based on the assumption that large-scale and rapid social change, globalization, and technology are central features in the postmodern era. Moreover, these conditions tend to have a harmful effect on people because they often result in ambiguity and chaos. One evident change is a significant decline in the influence of social institutions such as the family, religion, and education on people's lives. Those who live in postmodern societies typically pursue individual freedom and do not want the structural constraints imposed by social institutions. As social inequality and class differences increase, people are exposed to higher levels of stress that produce depression, fear, and ambivalence. Problems such as these are found in nations throughout the world.

Postmodern (or “postindustrial”) societies are characterized by an *information explosion* and an economy in which large numbers of people either provide or apply information, or are employed in professional occupations (such as attorneys and physicians) or service jobs (such as fast-food servers and health care workers). There is a corresponding *rise of a consumer society* and the emergence of a *global village* in which people around the world instantly communicate with one another.

Jean Baudrillard, a well-known French social theorist, has extensively explored how the shift from production of goods to consumption of information, services, and products has created a new form of social control. According to Baudrillard's approach, capitalists strive to control people's shopping habits, much like the output of factory workers in industrial economies, to enhance their profits and to

keep everyday people from rebelling against social inequality (1998/1970). How does this work? When consumers are encouraged to purchase more than they need or can afford, they often sink deeper in debt and must keep working to meet their monthly payments. Consumption comes to be based on factors such as our “wants” and our need to distinguish ourselves from others. We will return to Baudrillard’s general ideas on postmodern societies in Chapter 2. Postmodern theory opens up broad new avenues of inquiry by challenging existing perspectives and questioning current belief systems. However, postmodern theory has also been criticized for raising more questions than it answers.

Applying Postmodern Perspectives to Suicide Although most postmodern social theorists have not addressed suicide as a social issue, some sociologists believe that postmodern theory can help us because it reminds us that social life is made up of real people with self-identities and lived experiences to share with others. Behind the groups, organizations, classes, and political parties that social scientists study are human beings who participate in the social construction of everyday life.

Looked at from this perspective, the relationship between suicide and race is important to consider.

Although youths across ethnic categories share certain risk factors for suicide, young American Indian and Native American males appear to be at greater risk for suicide because people in this statistical category lack educational and employment opportunities. This problem is combined with other concerns, such as the systemic oppression that persons of color have experienced throughout U.S. history. In other words, the personal biographies of individuals are intertwined with the social worlds that they and others have helped create.

Each of the four sociological perspectives we have examined involves different assumptions. Consequently, each leads us to ask different questions and to view the world somewhat differently. (Concept Quick Review 1 summarizes all four of these perspectives.) Throughout this book, we will be using these perspectives as lenses through which to view our social world.

The Sociological Research Process

Most of us rely on our own experiences and personal knowledge to help us form ideas about what happens in everyday life and how the social world works. However, there are many occasions when this personal knowledge is not enough. This is why sociologists and other social scientists learn to question ordinary assumptions and use specific research methods to find out more about the social world.

Research is the process of systematically collecting information for the purpose of testing an existing theory or generating a new one. What is the relationship between sociological theory and research? This relationship has been referred to as a continuous cycle, as shown in ■ Figure 1.9 (Wallace, 1971).

Not all sociologists conduct research in the same manner. Some researchers primarily engage in quantitative research, whereas others engage in qualitative research. With **quantitative research**, the goal is scientific objectivity,

CONCEPT Quick Review 1		
The Major Theoretical Perspectives		
Perspective	Analysis Level	View of Society
Functionalist	Macrolevel	Society is composed of interrelated parts that work together to maintain stability within society. This stability is threatened by dysfunctional acts and institutions.
Conflict	Macrolevel	Society is characterized by social inequality; social life is a struggle for scarce resources. Social arrangements benefit some groups at the expense of others.
Symbolic Interactionist	Microlevel	Society is the sum of the interactions of people and groups. Behavior is learned in interaction with other people; how people define a situation becomes the foundation for how they behave.
Postmodernist	Macrolevel/ Microlevel	Societies characterized by postindustrialization, consumerism, and global communication bring into question existing assumptions about social life and the nature of reality.

macrolevel analysis

an approach that examines whole societies, large-scale social structures, and social systems instead of looking at important social dynamics in individuals’ lives.

microlevel analysis

an approach that focuses on small groups rather than large-scale social structures.

symbolic interactionist perspectives

the sociological approach that views society as the sum of the interactions of individuals and groups.

postmodern perspectives

the sociological approach that attempts to explain social life in contemporary societies characterized by postindustrialization, consumerism, and global communication.

quantitative research

sociological research methods based on the goal of scientific objectivity and that focus on data that can be measured numerically.

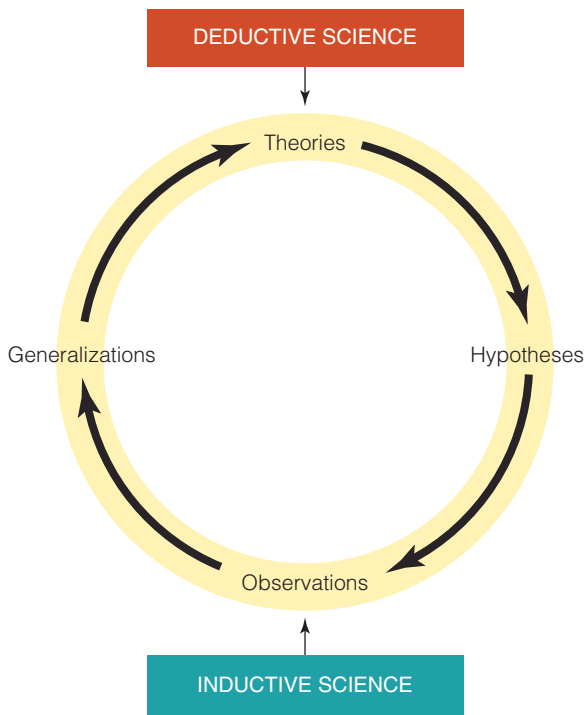


FIGURE 1.9 The Theory and Research Cycle

The theory and research cycle can be compared to a relay race; although all participants do not necessarily start or stop at the same point, they share a common goal—to examine all levels of social life.

and the focus is on data that can be measured numerically. Quantitative research typically emphasizes complex statistical techniques. Most sociological studies on suicide have used quantitative research. They have compared rates of suicide with almost every conceivable variable, including age, sex, race/ethnicity, education, and even sports participation. For example, in one quantitative study, researchers found that Latinos/as (Hispanics) consistently had lower suicide rates than whites (non-Hispanics), particularly when they remained strongly attached to others in their own culture. Latinos/as who maintained shared belief systems, rituals, and social networks of friends and relatives that provided them with strong communities and intense feelings of group solidarity were much less likely to commit suicide, much as Durkheim had predicted (Wadsworth and Kubrin, 2007). However, the study also found that just as cultural assimilation (adopting another culture and leaving one's own culture behind) increases the rate of suicide for Hispanics, having higher income and social standing decreases the rate of suicide (Wadsworth and Kubrin, 2007). In quantitative research, these data are reported in a series of tables that summarize the findings of the researchers. ("Understanding Statistical Data Presentations" explains how to read numerical tables and how to interpret the data and draw conclusions.)

With **qualitative research**, interpretive descriptions (words) rather than statistics (numbers) are used to analyze underlying meanings and patterns of social relationships.

An example of qualitative research is a study in which the researchers systematically analyzed the contents of suicide notes to look for recurring themes (such as feelings of despair or failure) to determine if any patterns could be found that would help in understanding why people kill themselves (Leenaars, 1988).

The Quantitative Research Model

Research models are tailored to the specific problem being investigated and the focus of the researcher. Both quantitative research and qualitative research contribute to our knowledge of society and human social interaction, and involve a series of steps, as shown in ■ Figure 1.10. We will now trace the steps in the "conventional" research model, which focuses on quantitative research. Then we will describe an alternative model that emphasizes qualitative research.

1. **Select and define the research problem.** Sometimes, a specific experience such as knowing someone who committed suicide can trigger your interest in a topic. Other times, you might select topics to fill gaps or challenge misconceptions in existing research or to test a specific theory (Babbie, 2016). Emile Durkheim selected suicide because he wanted to demonstrate the importance of *society* in situations that might appear to be arbitrary acts by individuals. Suicide was a suitable topic because it was widely believed that suicide was a uniquely individualistic act. However, Durkheim emphasized that *suicide rates* provide better explanations for suicide than do *individual* acts of suicide. He reasoned that if suicide were purely an individual act, then the rate of suicide (the number of people who kill themselves in a given year) should be the same for every group regardless of culture and social structure. Moreover, Durkheim wanted to know why there were different rates of suicide—whether factors such as religion, marital status, sex, and age had an effect on social cohesion.
2. **Review previous research.** Before beginning the research, it is important to analyze what others have written about the topic. You should determine where gaps exist and note mistakes to avoid. When Durkheim began his study, very little sociological literature existed to review; however, he studied the works of several moral philosophers, including Henry Morselli (1975/1881).
3. **Formulate the hypothesis** (if applicable). You may formulate a **hypothesis**—a statement of the expected relationship between two or more variables. A **variable** is any concept with measurable traits or characteristics that can change or vary from one person, time, situation, or society to another. The most fundamental relationship in a hypothesis is between a dependent variable and one or more independent variables (see ■ Figure 1.11). The **independent variable**

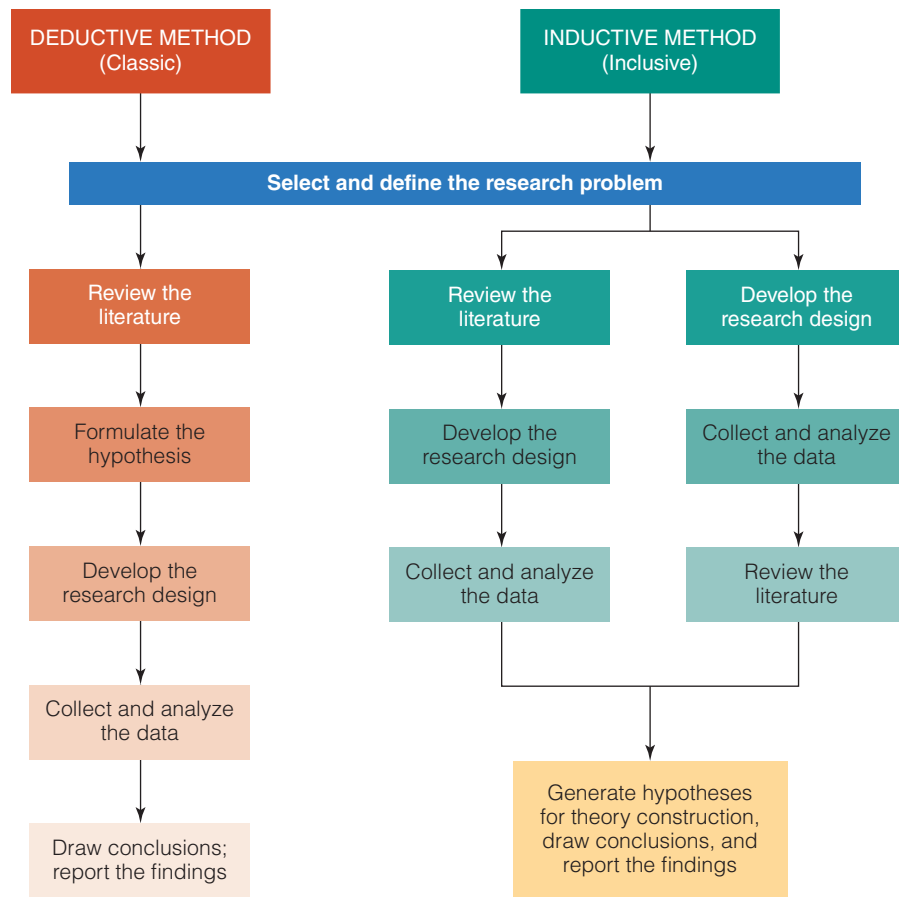


FIGURE 1.10 Steps in Sociological Research

is presumed to be the cause of the relationship; the **dependent variable** is assumed to be caused by the independent variable(s) (Babbie, 2016). Durkheim's hypothesis stated that the rate of suicide varies *inversely* with the degree of social integration. In other words, a low degree of social integration (the independent variable) may "cause" or "be related to" a high rate of suicide (the dependent variable).

Not all social research uses hypotheses. If you plan to conduct an explanatory study (showing a cause-and-effect relationship), you will likely want to formulate one or more hypotheses to test theories. If you plan to conduct a descriptive study, however, you will be less likely to do so because you may desire only to describe social reality or provide facts.

4. **Develop the research design.** You must determine the unit of analysis to be used in the study. A *unit of analysis* is *what* or *whom* is being studied (Babbie, 2016). In social science research, individuals, social groups (such as families, cities, or geographic regions), organizations (such as clubs, labor unions, or political parties), and social artifacts (such as books, paintings, or weddings) may be units of analysis. As mentioned, Durkheim's unit of analysis was social groups, not individuals.

5. **Collect and analyze the data.** You must decide what population will be observed or questioned and then carefully select a sample. A *sample* is the people selected from the population to be studied; the sample should accurately represent the larger population. A *representative sample* is a selection from a larger population that has the essential characteristics of the total population. For example, if you interviewed five

qualitative research

sociological research methods that use interpretive descriptions (words) rather than statistics (numbers) to analyze underlying meanings and patterns of social relationships.

hypothesis

a statement of the expected relationship between two or more variables.

variable

any concept with measurable traits or characteristics that can change or vary from one person, time, situation, or society to another.

independent variable

in an experiment, the variable assumed to be the cause of the relationship between variables.

dependent variable

in an experiment, the variable assumed to be caused by the independent variable(s).

UNDERSTANDING Statistical Data Presentations

Are young males or females more likely to die violently? How do homicide, suicide, and firearm death rates (per 100,000 population) compare for males and females ages 15 to 19 in the United States? Sociologists use statistical tables as a concise way to present data in a relatively small space; • Table 1.1 gives an example. To understand a table, follow these steps:

1. *Read the title.* From the title, “Rates (per 100,000 U.S. Population) for Homicide, Suicide, and Firearm-Related Deaths of Youths Ages 15–19, by Gender, 2017” (the latest data available at the time of this writing), we learn that the table shows relationships between two variables: gender and three causes of violent deaths among young people in a specific age category.
2. *Check the source and other explanatory notes.* In this case, the source is Child Trends, 2019. This data bank is a nonprofit research and policy center that researches issues pertaining to children and young people. The explanatory note in this table states that firearm deaths, which constitute a majority of teen homicides and suicides, may also include accidental deaths that are firearm related. This distinction is made in Table 1.1 because it is possible for “Firearm-Related Death” to occur accidentally.
3. *Read the headings for each column and each row.* The main column headings in Table 1.1 are “Method,” “Males,” and “Females.” The columns present information (usually numbers) arranged vertically. The rows present information horizontally. Here, the row headings indicate homicide, suicide, and firearm-related death. Based on the explanation regarding “Firearm-Related Death,” we know that some overlap exists between the first two categories—homicide and suicide—and the third, deaths that are firearm related.
4. *Examine and compare the data.* To examine the data, determine what units of measurement have been used. In Table 1.1, the figures are rates per 100,000 males or females in a specific age category. For example, the suicide rate is 17.9 per 100,000 population of males

TABLE 1.1 Rates (per 100,000 U.S. Population) for Homicide, Suicide, and Firearm-Related Deaths of Youths Ages 15–19, by Gender, 2017

Method	Males	Females
Homicide	14.7	2.4
Suicide	17.9	5.4
Firearm-Related Death ^a	23.9	3.2

^aFirearm deaths, which constitute a majority of teen homicides and suicides, also include accidental deaths that are firearm related.

Source: Child Trends, 2019.

between the ages of 15 and 19 as compared with only 5.4 per 100,000 population of females in the same age category.

5. *Draw conclusions.* By looking for patterns, some conclusions can be drawn from Table 1.1:
 - a. *Determining differences by gender.* Males between the ages of 15 and 19 are about three times more likely than females to die from suicide (17.9 compared with 5.4 per 100,000 in 2017). Males in this age category are about six times more likely to die from homicide than females (14.7 compared with 2.4 per 100,000). And even more noteworthy, males are about seven times more likely to die from any firearm-related incident (either intentional or unintentional) than females of this age. As shown in Table 1.1, 23.9 per 100,000 males ages 15–19 died by firearms in 2017, compared with 3.2 per 100,000 females in that same age category.
 - b. *Drawing appropriate conclusions.* Males between the ages of 15 and 19 are much more likely than females in their age category to die violently, and many of those deaths are firearm related. Although not indicated in this table, it is important to note that differences by race and Hispanic origin are also significant to consider in any sociological analysis of suicide rates. For more information, visit childtrends.org.

students selected haphazardly from your sociology class, they would not be representative of your school’s student body. By contrast, if you selected five students from the student body by a random sample, they would be closer to being representative (although a random sample of five students would be too small to yield much useful data).

Validity and reliability may be problems in research. **Validity** is the extent to which a study or research instrument accurately measures what it is supposed to measure. A recurring issue in studies that analyze the relationship between religious beliefs and suicide is whether “church membership”

is a valid indicator of a person’s religious beliefs. In fact, one person may be very religious yet not belong to a specific church, whereas another person may be a member of a church yet not hold very deep religious beliefs. **Reliability** is the extent to which a study or research instrument yields consistent results when applied to different individuals at one time or to the same individuals over time. Sociologists have found that different interviewers get different answers from the people being interviewed. For example, how might the interviewers themselves influence interviews with college students who have contemplated suicide?

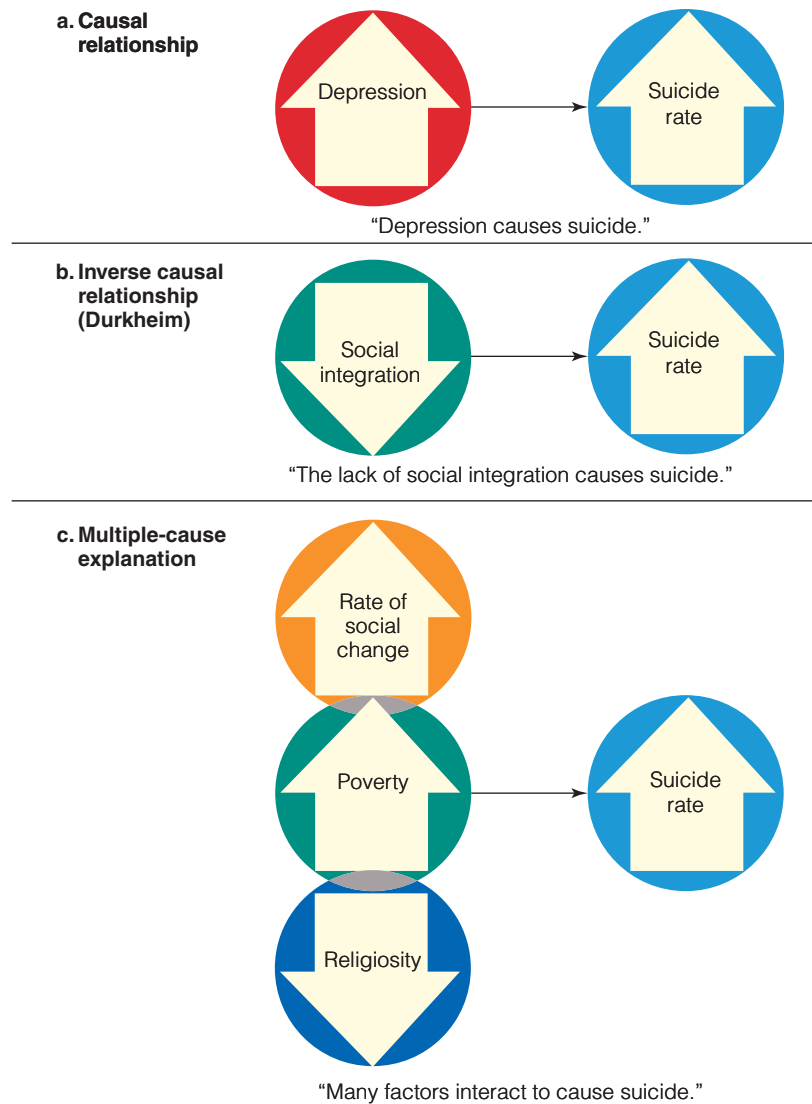


FIGURE 1.11 Hypothesized Relationships Between Variables

A causal hypothesis connects one or more independent (causal) variables with a dependent (affected) variable. The diagram illustrates three hypotheses about the causes of suicide. To test these hypotheses, social scientists would need to operationalize the variables (define them in measurable terms) and then investigate whether the data support the proposed explanation.

Once you have collected your data, the data must be analyzed. *Analysis* is the process through which data are organized so that comparisons can be made and conclusions drawn. Sociologists use many techniques to analyze data. For his study of suicide, Durkheim collected data from vital statistics for approximately 26,000 suicides. He classified them separately according to age, sex, marital status, presence, or absence of children in the family, religion, geographic location, calendar date, method of suicide, and a number of other variables. As Durkheim analyzed his data, four distinct categories of suicide emerged: egoistic, altruistic, anomic, and fatalistic. *Egoistic suicide* occurs among people who

are isolated from any social group. For example, Durkheim concluded that suicide rates were relatively high in Protestant countries in Europe because Protestants believed in individualism and were more loosely tied to the church than were Catholics.

validity

the extent to which a study or research instrument accurately measures what it is supposed to measure.

reliability

the extent to which a study or research instrument yields consistent results when applied to different individuals at one time or to the same individuals over time.

Single people had proportionately higher suicide rates than married persons because they had a low degree of social integration, which contributed to their loneliness. In contrast, *altruistic suicide* occurs among individuals who are excessively integrated into society. An example is military leaders who kill themselves after defeat in battle because they have so strongly identified themselves with their cause that they believe they cannot live with defeat. Today, other factors such as extended periods of military service or lengthy wars may also contribute to relatively high rates of suicide among U.S. military personnel (see “Sociology and Social Policy”). According to Durkheim, people are more likely to commit suicide when social cohesion is either very weak or very strong, and/or when nations experience rapid social change.

6. *Draw conclusions and report the findings.* After analyzing the data, your first step in drawing conclusions is to return to your hypothesis or research objective to clarify how the data relate both to the hypothesis and to the larger issues being addressed. At this stage, you note the limitations of the study, such as problems with the sample, the influence of variables over which you had no control, or variables that your study was unable to measure.

Reporting the findings is the final stage. The report generally includes a review of each step taken in the research process to make the study available for *replication*—the repetition of the investigation in substantially the same way that it was originally conducted. Social scientists generally present their findings in papers at professional meetings and publish them in technical journals and books. In reporting his findings in *Suicide* (1964b/1897), Durkheim concluded that the suicide rate of a group is a social fact that cannot be explained in terms of the personality traits of individuals. Instead, his findings suggested that social conditions in a society are a more significant influence on rates of suicide.

We have traced the steps in the “conventional” research process (based on deduction and quantitative research). But what steps might be taken in an alternative approach based on induction and qualitative research?

A Qualitative Research Model

Although the same underlying logic is involved in both quantitative and qualitative sociological research, the *styles* of these two models are very different. Qualitative research is more likely to be used when the research question does not easily lend itself to numbers and statistical methods. As compared to a quantitative model, a qualitative approach often involves a different type of research question and a smaller number of cases. Researchers using a qualitative

approach may engage in *problem formulation* to clarify the research question and formulate questions of concern and interest to people participating in the research.

In a qualitative approach, reviewing the literature and developing the research design often happen simultaneously. Typically, the next step is collecting and analyzing data to assess the validity of the starting proposition. Data gathering is the foundation of the research. Researchers pursuing a qualitative approach tend to gather data in natural settings, such as where the person lives or works, rather than in a laboratory or other research setting. Data collection and analysis frequently occur concurrently, and the analysis draws heavily on the language of the persons studied, not the researcher. Additional review of the literature may occur later in the process after data have been gathered and further insights are needed to help describe, explain, or make predictions from the data that have been analyzed. Finally, the researchers draw conclusions from their research and report their findings to others.

How would qualitative research work for the study of suicide? One Canadian study examined suicide among twenty-two older men who had previously experienced depression, and the study found important relationships between societal expectations about masculinity, depression, and suicide (Olfiffe et al., 2011). To find out more about linkages between depression and suicide, researchers interviewed the men to learn more about how cumulative losses had contributed to their depression and lack of desire to live. The loss of social bonds, through deaths of family members and friends, was a major factor in their depression and thoughts about suicide. Other factors that contributed to their depression and suicidal tendencies were feelings that they were a failure as a breadwinner and/or beliefs that they had other shortcomings that their older age prevented them from overcoming. However, the qualitative study revealed that many of the participants would not commit suicide because of the stigma associated with this act and their guilt about the pain this act would bring to their family and friends (Olfiffe et al., 2011).

From qualitative studies such as this one, we learn information that we might not find when using quantitative research. We find answers to questions such as “why” people might or might not engage in a specific behavior. Qualitative and quantitative research methods are often used in combination with each other in a research design to provide a more holistic view of the social world.

Research Methods

How do sociologists know which research method to use? Are some approaches best for a particular problem? *Research methods* are specific strategies or techniques for systematically conducting research. We will look at four of these methods: survey research, secondary analysis of existing data, field research, and experiments.

Survey Research

A **survey** is a poll in which the researcher gathers facts or attempts to determine the relationships among facts. Surveys are the most widely used research method in the social sciences because they make it possible to study things that are not directly observable—such as people’s attitudes and beliefs—and to describe a population too large to observe directly (Babbie, 2016) (■Figure 1.12). Researchers frequently select a representative sample from a larger population to answer questions about attitudes, opinions, or behavior. *Respondents* are people who provide data for analysis through interviews or questionnaires. The Gallup and Harris polls are among the most widely known large-scale surveys; however, government agencies such as the U.S. Census Bureau conduct a variety of surveys as well.

Unlike many polls that use various methods of gaining a representative sample of the larger population, the Census Bureau attempts to gain information from all persons in the United States. The decennial census occurs every ten years, in the years ending in “0.” The purpose of this census is to count the population and housing units of the entire nation. The population count determines how seats in the U.S. House of Representatives are apportioned; however, census figures are also used in formulating public policy and in planning and decision making in the private sector. The Census Bureau attempts to survey the *entire* U.S. population by using two forms—a “short form” of questions asked of all respondents and a “long form” that contains additional questions asked of a *representative sample* of about one in six respondents. Statistics from the Census Bureau provide information that sociologists use in their research.

Types of Surveys Survey data are collected by using self-administered questionnaires, face-to-face interviews, and telephone or computer surveys. A **questionnaire** is a printed research instrument containing a series of items to which subjects respond. Items are often in the form of statements with which the respondent is asked to “agree” or “disagree.” Questionnaires may be administered by interviewers in



Paul Conklin/PhotoEdit

FIGURE 1.12 Conducting surveys and polls is an important means of gathering data from respondents. Some surveys take place on street corners; increasingly, however, such surveys are done by telephone, Internet, and other means.

face-to-face encounters or by telephone, but the most commonly used technique is the *self-administered questionnaire*, which is either mailed to the respondent’s home or administered to groups of respondents gathered at the same place at the same time. For example, in a now-classic study of suicide, race, and religion, sociologist Kevin E. Early (1992) used survey data collected through questionnaires to test his hypothesis that suicide rates are lower among African Americans than among white Americans because of the influence of black churches. Data from questionnaires filled out by members of six African American churches in Florida supported Early’s hypothesis that the church buffers some African Americans against harsh social forces—such as racism—that might otherwise lead to suicide.

Survey data may also be collected by interviews.

An **interview** is a data-collection encounter in which an interviewer asks the respondent questions and records the answers. Survey research often uses *structured interviews*, in which the interviewer asks questions from a standardized questionnaire. Structured interviews tend to produce uniform or replicable data that can be elicited time after time by different interviews. For example, in addition to surveying congregation members, Early (1992) conducted interviews with pastors of African American churches to determine the pastors’ opinions about

research methods

specific strategies or techniques for systematically conducting research.

survey

a poll in which the researcher gathers facts or attempts to determine the relationships among facts.

questionnaire

a printed research instrument containing a series of items to which subjects respond.

interview

a data-collection encounter in which an interviewer asks the respondent questions and records the answers.

Establishing Policies to Help Prevent Military Suicides

- “Breaking News!” Shocking Headlines and TV News Stories in Recent Years Have Reported that Suicide Rates Are Increasing in the U.S. Military
- Military Leaders and Politicians Are Looking for Ways to Help Active Service Members, Veterans, and Their Families

Television news, social media, and Internet publications such as *military.com* have been using terms such as “highest rates” and “record highs” to describe the number of suicides that have occurred in recent years in the U.S. Military. Certainly, suicide is a problem nationwide, but it is a special problem in the military. Despite new policies implemented in the past decade and increased efforts to reduce military suicides through prevention programs and other mental health initiatives, it has seemed impossible to permanently reduce the number of military suicides (*military.com*, 2019a).

Shocked by relatively high rates of both suicide and suicide attempts among military service members, the U.S. Department of Defense and the executive branch of the U.S. government have encouraged all branches of the military to learn more about the sociological causes of suicide and to develop comprehensive suicide-prevention initiatives to help reduce the problem and support military service members around the globe. A 2012 executive order, “Improving Access to Mental Health for Veterans, Service Members, and Military Families,” set forth initiatives designed to improve mental health resources and intervention tools, such as increasing the number of crisis lines, peer-to-peer counselors, and mental health professionals available to service members and veterans. The Durkheim Project (named for sociologist Emile Durkheim) was started by the Department of Defense and the Department of Veterans Affairs in an effort to help veterans in distress. However, many people have become concerned that this issue is not a priority in contemporary politics. Clearly, a variety of sociological issues is central in dealing with suicidal ideation and behavior in the military. In the words of a U.S. Army (2012: 51) report, “Each potential suicide or attempted suicide is different with respect to contributing factors and triggering events. Each victim responds differently to pre-suicide stressors based on protective factors such as personal resilience, coping skills, and whether or not they are help-seeking. . . .”

Studies have been conducted to gain a better understanding of why suicides were happening and what might be done to prevent this pressing problem, but no single cause has been identified for suicide. Factors such as financial worries, relationship issues, legal trouble,



Fabrizio Bensch/Reuters

What unique social conditions do military personnel face that might contribute to suicide or other conditions such as depression and alcoholism?

substance abuse, medical problems, frequent deployment, and posttraumatic stress are all thought to be associated with suicidal behavior among military personnel (*military.com*, 20019b). The fact remains that we must do better in the future. Consider, for example, that in 2018 (the latest year for which data are available), a total of 325 active-duty members took their lives, including 58 marines, 68 sailors, 60 airmen, and 139 soldiers, which was an increase over the previous year (*military.com*, 2019b). Services members are now provided with Military OneSource, which is a free service provided by the Department of Defense to service members and their families to help with mental health problems and other concerns. The Defense Centers of Excellence for Psychological Health and Traumatic Brain Injury (DCoE) provides information and resources about psychological health, posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and traumatic brain injury. Each of these centers is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week (*mentalhealth.gov*, 2019). Can you think of types of outreach to active military and retired service personnel that might help reduce this current U.S. crisis, the highest rate of military suicides since record-keeping began after the 9/11 terrorist attack?

Reflect & Analyze

How might lengthy deployments away from home contribute to suicidal behavior among troops? Why do some military personnel commit suicide after they return home?

the extent to which African American churches reinforce values and beliefs that discourage suicide.

Interviews have specific advantages such as being more effective in dealing with complicated issues and providing an opportunity for face-to-face communication between the interviewer and the respondent. Although interviews provide a wide variety of useful information, a major disadvantage is the cost and time involved in conducting the interviews and analyzing the results.

A quicker method of administering questionnaires is the *telephone* or *computer survey*. Telephone and computer surveys give greater control over data collection and provide greater personal safety for respondents and researchers than do personal encounters (■ Figure 1.13).

In *computer-assisted telephone interviewing* (sometimes called CATI), the interviewer uses a computer to dial random telephone numbers, reads the questions shown on the video monitor to the respondent, and then types the responses into the computer terminal. The answers are immediately stored in the central computer, which automatically prepares them for data analysis. However, the respondent must answer the phone before the interview can take place, and many people screen their phone calls. In the past few years, online survey research has increased dramatically as software packages and online survey services have made this type of research easier to conduct. Online research makes it possible to study virtual communities, online relationships, and other types of computer-mediated communications networks around the world.

Survey research is useful in describing the characteristics of a large population without having to interview each person in that population. In recent years, computer technology has enhanced researchers' ability to do *multivariate analysis*—research involving more than two independent variables. For example, to assess the influence of religion on suicidal behavior among African Americans, a researcher might look at the effects of age, sex, income level, and other variables all at once to determine which of these independent variables influences suicide the most or least and how influential each variable is relative to the others. However, a weakness of survey research is the use of standardized questions; this approach tends to force respondents into categories in which they may or may not belong. Moreover, survey research relies on self-reported information, and some people may be less than truthful, particularly on emotionally charged issues such as suicide.



FIGURE 1.13 Computer-assisted telephone interviewing is an easy and cost-efficient method of conducting research. However, the widespread use of cellphones, voice mail, and caller ID is making this form of research much more difficult in the twenty-first century.

Secondary Analysis of Existing Data

In *secondary analysis*, researchers use existing material and analyze data that were originally collected by others. Existing data sources include public records, official reports of organizations or government agencies, and *raw data* collected by other researchers. For example, Durkheim used vital statistics (death records) that were originally collected for other purposes to examine the relationship among variables such as age, marital status, and the circumstances surrounding the person's suicide. Today, many researchers studying suicide use data compiled by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). For example, look at ■ Figure 1.14, "National Suicide Statistics by State at a Glance," based on data compiled by the CDC, and try to develop several plausible sociological explanations for why suicide rates are higher in some states and regions of the United States. Can you provide an explanation why rates might be higher or lower in certain areas such as the state where you live?

Secondary analysis also includes *content analysis*—the systematic examination of cultural artifacts or various

secondary analysis

a research method in which researchers use existing material and analyze data that were originally collected by others.

content analysis

the systematic examination of cultural artifacts or various forms of communication to extract thematic data and draw conclusions about social life.



One strength of secondary analysis is that data are readily available and inexpensive. Another is that because the researcher often does not collect the data personally, the chances of bias may be reduced. In addition, the use of existing sources makes it possible to analyze longitudinal data (things that take place over a period of time or at several different points in time) to provide a historical context within which to locate original research. However, secondary analysis has inherent problems. For one thing, the researcher does not always know if the data are incomplete, unauthentic, or inaccurate.

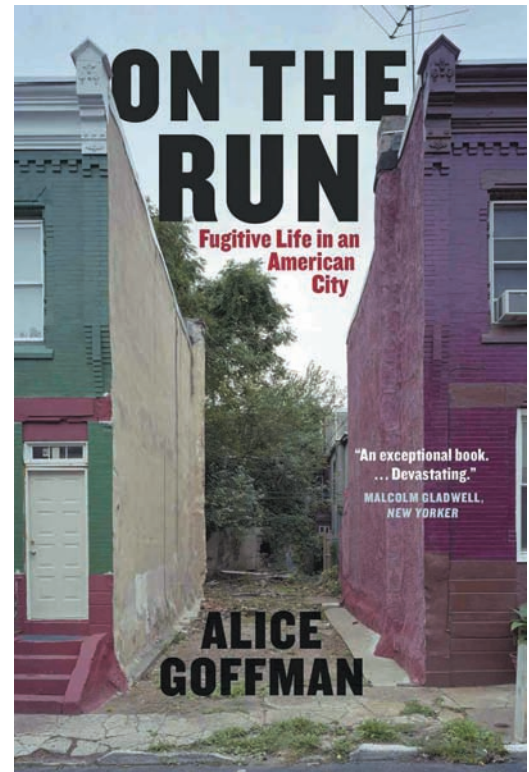
Field research is the study of social life in its natural setting: observing and interviewing people where they live, work, and play. Some kinds of behavior can be best studied by “being there”; a fuller understanding can be developed through observations, face-to-face discussions, and participation in events. Researchers use these methods to generate qualitative data: observations that are best described verbally rather than numerically.

Sociologists who are interested in observing social interaction as it occurs may use **participant observation**—the process of collecting systematic observations while being part of the activities of the group that the researcher is studying. Participant observation generates more “inside” information than simply asking questions or observing from the outside. For example, to learn more about how coroners make a ruling of “suicide” in connection with a death and to analyze what (if any) effect such a ruling has on the accuracy of “official” suicide statistics, sociologist Steve Taylor (1982) engaged in participant observation at a coroner’s office over a six-month period. As he followed



CHANG W LEE/The New York Times/REDUX PICTURES (NEW YORK TIMES)

FIGURE 1.15 Alice Goffman



University of Chicago Press

FIGURE 1.16 *On the Run: Fugitive Life in an American City* by Alice Goffman (University of Chicago Press, 2014).

a number of cases from the initial report of death through the various stages of investigation, Taylor learned that it was important to “be around” so that he could listen to discussions and ask the coroners questions because intuition and guesswork play a large part in some decisions to rule a death as a suicide.

Another approach to field research is **ethnography**—a detailed study of the life and activities of a group of people by researchers who may live with that group over a period of years. Unlike participant observation, ethnographic studies usually take place over a longer period of time. For example, sociologist Alice Goffman (2014) spent six years living in a high-crime, drug-ridden Philadelphia neighborhood before writing her book *On the Run: Fugitive Life in an American City* (■ Figures 1.15 and 1.16). She interviewed a wide array of people, including many young African American men who had been caught up in a web of drug dealing and surveillance by law enforcement officers. Based on her extensive ethnographic research, Goffman was able to describe in great detail how generations of young men had been sacrificed in the drug war and how the blighting of neighborhoods contributed to the problems of young people who had few opportunities for the future. It is important to note that Goffman’s work received not only extensive media coverage and praise from some reviewers but also criticism from others who believed that

she had exploited her subjects, that she had possibly run afoul of the law in some activities with her research subjects, and that there were ethical issues with her overall research (Lewis-Kraus, 2016).

Experiments

An **experiment** is a carefully designed situation in which the researcher studies the effect of certain variables on subjects’ attitudes or behavior. Experiments are designed to create “real-life” situations, ideally under controlled circumstances, in which the influence of different variables can be modified and measured. Conventional experiments require that subjects be divided into two groups: an experimental

participant observation

a research method in which researchers collect systematic observations while being part of the activities of the group being studied.

ethnography

a detailed study of the life and activities of a group of people by researchers who may live with that group over a period of years.

experiment

a carefully designed situation in which the researcher studies the effect of certain variables on subjects’ attitudes or behavior.



Jochen Tack/imageBroker/Age Fotostock

FIGURE 1.17 Do extremely violent video games cause an increase in violent tendencies in their users? Experiments are one way to test a researcher's hypothesis about this relationship.

group and a control group. The **experimental group** contains the subjects who are exposed to an independent variable (the experimental condition) to study its effect on them. The **control group** contains the subjects who are not exposed to the independent variable. For example, sociologist Arturo Biblarz and colleagues (1991) examined the effects of media violence and depictions of suicide on attitudes toward suicide by showing one group of subjects (an experimental group) a film about suicide, whereas a second (another experimental group) saw a film about violence, and a third (the control group) saw a film containing neither suicide nor violence. The research found some evidence that people exposed to suicidal acts or violence in the media may be more likely to demonstrate an emotional state favorable to suicidal behavior, particularly if they are already “at risk” for suicide. If we were able to replicate this study today, do you believe that we would find similar results? Why or why not?

Researchers may use experiments when they want to demonstrate that a cause-and-effect relationship exists between variables, such as whether violent video games cause an increase in violent tendencies in people who use them (■ Figure 1.17). To show that a change in one variable causes a change in another, three conditions must be satisfied: (1) a correlation between the two variables must be shown to exist (**correlation** exists when two variables are

associated more frequently than could be expected by chance), (2) the independent variable must have occurred prior to the dependent variable, and (3) any change in the dependent variable must not have been caused by an extraneous variable—one outside the stated hypothesis.

The major advantage of an experiment is the researcher's control over the environment and the ability to isolate the experimental variable. Because many experiments require relatively little time and money and can be conducted with limited numbers of subjects, it is possible for researchers to replicate an experiment several times by using different groups of subjects (Babbie, 2016). Perhaps the greatest limitation of experiments is that they are artificial: Social processes set up by researchers or that take place in a laboratory setting are often not the same as real-life occurrences (see Concept Quick Review 2).

Ethical Issues in Sociological Research

The study of people (“human subjects”) raises vital questions about ethical concerns in sociological research. Researchers are required to obtain written “informed

CONCEPT Quick Review 2

Strengths and Weaknesses of Social Research Methods

Research Method	Strengths	Weaknesses
Experiments (laboratory, field, natural)	Control over research Ability to isolate experimental factors Relatively little time and money required Replication possible, except for natural experiments	Artificial by nature Frequent reliance on volunteers or captive audiences Ethical questions of deception
Survey research (questionnaire, interview, telephone survey)	Useful in describing features of a large population without interviewing everyone Relatively large samples possible Multivariate analysis possible	Potentially forced answers Respondent untruthfulness on emotional issues Data that are not always “hard facts” presented as such in statistical analyses
Secondary analysis of existing data (existing statistics, content analysis)	Data often readily available, inexpensive to collect Longitudinal and comparative studies Replication possible	Difficulty in determining accuracy of some of the data Failure of data gathered by others to meet goals of current research Questions of privacy when using diaries, other personal documents
Field research (participant observation, case study, ethnography, unstructured)	Opportunity to gain insider's view Useful for studying attitudes and behavior in natural settings Longitudinal/comparative studies possible Documentation of important social problems of excluded groups possible Access to people's ideas in their words Forum for previously excluded groups Documentation of need for social reform	Problems in generalizing results to a larger population Imprecise data measurements Inability to demonstrate cause/effect relationships or test theories Difficult to make comparisons because of lack of structure Not a representative sample

consent” statements from the persons they study—but what constitutes “informed consent”? And how do researchers protect the identity and confidentiality of their sources?

The American Sociological Association (ASA) *Code of Ethics* (2008/1999) sets forth certain basic standards that sociologists must follow in conducting research. Among these standards are the following:

1. Researchers must endeavor to maintain objectivity and integrity in their research by disclosing their research findings in full and including all possible interpretations of the data (even when these interpretations do not support their own viewpoints).

experimental group

the group that contains the subjects who are exposed to an independent variable (the experimental condition) to study its effect on them.

control group

the group that contains the subjects who are not exposed to the independent variable.

correlation

a relationship that exists when two variables are associated more frequently than could be expected by chance.

2. Researchers must safeguard the participants' right to privacy and dignity while protecting them from harm.
3. Researchers must protect confidential information provided by participants, even when this information is not considered to be "privileged" (legally protected, as is the case between doctor and patient and between attorney and client) and legal pressure is applied to reveal this information.
4. Researchers must acknowledge research collaboration and assistance they receive from others and disclose all sources of financial support.

Sociologists are obligated to adhere to this code and to protect research participants; however, many ethical issues still arise. A now-classic study in sociology illustrates this point. In the 1970s, sociologist William M. Zellner (1978) wanted to look at fatal single-occupant automobile accidents to determine if some drivers were actually committing suicide when they were involved in car crashes. To examine this issue further, he sought to interview the family, friends, and acquaintances of persons killed in single-car crashes to determine if the deaths were possibly intentional. To recruit respondents, Zellner told them that he hoped the research would reduce the number of automobile accidents in the future. He did not mention that he suspected "autocide" might have occurred in the case of their friend or loved one. From his data, Zellner concluded that at least 12 percent of

the fatal single-occupant crashes were suicides—and that these crashes sometimes also killed or critically injured other people as well. However, Zellner's research raised important research questions: Was his research unethical? Did he misrepresent the reasons for his study?

In the twenty-first century, other researchers have called attention to the ethics of suicide research. These ethical problems include how to maintain the confidentiality of research participants, as well as how to respond in a sensitive and supportive manner to meet their needs (Lakeman and Fitzgerald, 2009). When studies of suicides are conducted to provide better insights on how to reduce rates of suicide, these ethical concerns are important in all stages of the research process.

In this chapter, we have looked at how theory and research work together to provide us with insights on human behavior. Theory and research are the "lifeblood" of sociology. Theory provides the framework for analysis; research provides opportunities for us to use our sociological imagination to generate new knowledge. Our challenge today is to find new ways of integrating knowledge and action, and to include all people in the theory and research process to help fill the gaps in our existing knowledge about social life and how it is shaped by gender, race, class, age, and the broader social and cultural context in which everyday life occurs.

Q&A Chapter Review

Use these questions and answers to check how well you've achieved the learning objectives set out at the beginning of this chapter.

LO1 What is sociology, and how can it help us understand others and ourselves?

Sociology is the systematic study of human society and social interaction. We study sociology to understand how human behavior is shaped by group life and, in turn, how individuals affect group life. Our culture tends to emphasize individualism, and sociology pushes us to consider more complex connections between our personal lives and the larger world.

LO2 What is meant by the sociological imagination, and how can we develop a global sociological imagination?

According to C. Wright Mills, the sociological imagination helps us understand how seemingly personal troubles such as suicide are actually related to larger social forces. It is the ability to see the relationship between individual experiences and the larger society. To develop a global sociological imagination, we must reach beyond past studies that have focused primarily on the United States and seek to develop a

more comprehensive global approach. It is important to have a global sociological imagination because the future of this nation is deeply intertwined with the future of all nations of the world on economic, political, and humanitarian levels.

LO3 What was the historical context in which sociological thinking developed, and why were many early social thinkers concerned with social order and stability?

The origins of sociological thinking as we know it today can be traced to the scientific revolution in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and to the Age of Enlightenment. Industrialization and urbanization increased rapidly in the late eighteenth century, and social thinkers began to examine the consequences of these powerful forces. As a result of rapid social change in societies, early thinkers—such as Auguste Comte, Harriet Martineau, Herbert Spencer, and Emile Durkheim—focused on social order and stability, and many of their ideas had a dramatic influence on modern sociology. Comte coined the term *sociology* to

describe a new science that would engage in the study of society. Comte's works were made more accessible for a wide variety of scholars through the efforts of Martineau. Spencer's major contribution to sociology was an evolutionary perspective on social order and social change. Durkheim argued that rapid social change produces strains in society and that the loss of shared values and purpose can lead to a condition of anomie.

LO4 Why were many early social thinkers concerned with social change?

In sharp contrast to Durkheim's focus on the stability of society, German economist and philosopher Karl Marx stressed that history is a continuous clash between conflicting ideas and forces. He believed that conflict—especially class conflict—is necessary to produce social change and a better society. Although he disagreed with Marx's idea that economics is *the* central force in social change, German social scientist Max Weber acknowledged that economic interests are important in shaping human action. Weber was particularly concerned with changes brought about by the Industrial Revolution and the influences these changes had on human behavior. In particular, Weber was concerned that large-scale organizations were becoming increasingly oriented toward routine administration and a specialized division of labor, which he believed were destructive to human vitality and freedom. Whereas other sociologists primarily focused on society as a whole, Simmel explored small social groups and argued that society was best seen as a web of patterned interactions among people.

LO5 What are key differences in functionalist, conflict, symbolic interactionist, and postmodern perspectives on contemporary social life?

Functionalist perspectives assume that society is a stable, orderly system characterized by societal consensus. Conflict perspectives argue that society is a continuous power struggle among competing groups, often based on class, race, ethnicity, or gender. Symbolic interactionist perspectives focus on how people make sense of their everyday social interactions. From an alternative perspective, postmodern theorists believe that entirely new ways of examining social life are needed and that it is time to move beyond functionalist, conflict, and symbolic interactionist approaches.

LO6 Why is sociological research necessary, and how does it challenge our commonsense beliefs about pressing social issues such as suicide?

Sociological research provides a factual and objective counterpoint to commonsense knowledge and ill-informed sources of information. It is based on an empirical approach that answers questions through a direct, systematic collection and analysis of data.

LO7 How does quantitative research differ from qualitative research? What steps are involved in each method?

Quantitative research focuses on data that can be measured numerically (comparing rates of suicide, for example). Qualitative research focuses on interpretive description (words) rather than statistics to analyze underlying meanings and patterns of social relationships. Key steps in the quantitative research process include (1) selecting and defining the research problem; (2) reviewing previous research; (3) formulating the hypothesis, which involves constructing variables; (4) developing the research design; (5) collecting and analyzing the data; and (6) drawing conclusions and reporting the findings. By contrast, key steps in the qualitative approach often include (1) reviewing the literature and formulating the problem to be studied instead of creating a hypothesis, (2) collecting and analyzing the data, and (3) reporting the results.

LO8 What is survey research, and what are the three types of surveys?

Surveys are polls used to gather facts about people's attitudes, opinions, or behaviors; a representative sample of respondents provides data through questionnaires or interviews. Survey data are collected by using self-administered questionnaires, face-to-face interviews, and telephone or computer surveys.

LO9 How do the following research methods compare: surveys, secondary analysis of existing data, field research, and experiments?

Surveys are polls used to gather facts about people's attitudes, opinions, or behaviors; a representative sample of respondents provides data through questionnaires or interviews. In secondary analysis, researchers analyze existing data, such as a government census, or cultural artifacts, such as a diary. In field research, sociologists study social life in its natural setting through participant observation, case studies, unstructured interviews, and ethnography. Through experiments, researchers study the effect of certain variables on their subjects.

LO10 What ethical issues are involved in sociological research, and what professional codes protect research participants?

Because sociology involves the study of people ("human subjects"), researchers are required to obtain the informed consent of the people they study; however, in some instances what constitutes "informed consent" may be difficult to determine. The American Sociological Association (ASA) *Code of Ethics* (2008/1999) sets forth certain basic standards that sociologists must follow in conducting research.

Key Terms

anomie 12	interview 25	research methods 24
conflict perspectives 16	latent functions 15	secondary analysis 27
content analysis 27	low-income countries 8	social Darwinism 11
control group 30	macrolevel analysis 18	social facts 12
correlation 30	manifest functions 15	society 5
dependent variable 21	microlevel analysis 18	sociological imagination 6
ethnography 29	middle-income countries 8	sociology 4
experiment 29	participant observation 28	survey 25
experimental group 30	positivism 11	symbolic interactionist perspectives 18
functionalist perspectives 15	postmodern perspectives 18	theory 14
high-income countries 8	qualitative research 20	urbanization 10
hypothesis 20	quantitative research 19	validity 22
independent variable 20	questionnaire 25	variable 20
industrialization 10	reliability 22	

Questions for Critical Thinking

- 1 Why does the concept of the sociological imagination help us see the relationship between our individual experiences and the larger society? How might this concept be applied to studying a current personal problem that you or one of your friends is experiencing?
- 2 As a sociologist, how would you remain objective yet still see the world as others see it? Would you make subjective decisions when trying to understand the perspectives of others?
- 3 With digital technology, social media, and the rapid flow of global information, why are sociological theory and research even more important than in the past for helping people understand social behavior and the larger social world?

Answers to **Sociology Quiz**

Suicide

1	False	The highest rates of suicide worldwide occur in middle- and low-income nations.
2	True	Suicide is routinely the tenth leading cause of death (more than 47,000 people) in the United States.
3	True	More than twice as many suicides (more than 47,000) occur in the United States each year as there are homicides (more than 20,000). White males accounted for nearly 70 percent of all U.S. suicides in 2017.
4	True	Females attempt suicide three times as often as males, but males are four times more likely than females to die by suicide.
5	False	The World Health Organization estimates that more than 800,000 suicide deaths occur worldwide each year.
6	True	Firearms are the most commonly used method of suicide among both males and females.
7	True	Among males, the U.S. suicide rate is highest for men aged 65 and older than any other age category.
8	True	The prevalence of suicide attempts typically is highest each year among adults between the ages of 18 and 25.

Sources: Based on National Center for Health Statistics, 2019, and National Institute of Mental Health, 2019.



Culture

2

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- 1 Explain** why culture is important in determining how people think and act on a daily basis.
- 2 Distinguish** between material culture and nonmaterial culture.
- 3 Explain** the term *cultural universals* with examples.
- 4 Discuss** symbols, language, and values as components of culture.
- 5 Describe** the types of norms.
- 6 Describe** cultural diversity and the ways in which technological changes affect culture.
- 7 Explain** the concepts of culture shock, ethnocentrism, cultural relativism, high culture, and popular culture.
- 8 Compare** the functionalist, conflict, symbolic interactionist, and postmodernist perspectives on society and culture.

SOCIOLOGY & **Everyday Life**

Spreading Culture Through Food Trucks?

Food brings people together in ways that words cannot, as it provides a universal outlet of creativity through which we can express ourselves. . . . We can pour culture and inspiration into our food, a subtle form of communication that is understood by all. The recent food truck craze in America has made this ability to bring people together through food even easier and has indirectly spread cultural awareness with food as the medium.

—Veronica Werhane (2011), senior arts and culture editor for @neontommy, USC Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism, explaining how food trucks have become vehicles for spreading culture through food

In a Yale University Introduction to Public Humanities class taught by Dean Ryan Brasseaux in fall 2013, students examined how New Haven, Connecticut, became a “food truck town” (*Yale News*, 2013). The students specifically wanted to find out how the local food culture was intertwined with New Haven’s history, particularly in regard to racial and ethnic diversity. Using ethnographic filming, interactive mapping, and oral histories from the owners of food



How is the food that we consume linked to our identity and the larger culture of which we are a part? Do people who identify with more than one culture face more complex issues when it comes to food preferences?

trucks ranging from the Cannoli Truck and Joe Grate’s BBQ to Peking Edo Cart and Ricky D’s Rib Shack, the students created a “food routes” project. The proprietors were asked questions, such as why they chose to enter the food-truck business, how they determined their routes, what their relationship

Do you eat at mobile food trucks or street vendors’ carts? Many of us do both at home and when we are traveling because food trucks and street carts have been around for a long time, selling food and drinks on city streets around the world. In the United States, beginning in the 1950s and 1960s, *loncheras*, or taco trucks, made daily stops at multiple work locations in cities such as New York and Los Angeles. The drivers slid open the shiny metal sides of their vehicles to display a variety of foods available for purchase at reasonable prices by the workers from nearby office buildings or construction sites. Street vendors in locations such as New York City have sold food to hungry passersby for decades. Everything from a banana and muffin for breakfast to full steak dinners are available from these vendors.

By the beginning of the third decade of the twenty-first century, dramatic shifts have occurred in the mobile food industry, and now elaborately painted food trucks are a common sight on public streets and college campuses throughout the nation. These trucks offer customers a wide variety of comfort food, ethnic feasts, and even gourmet, haute cuisine prepared from the menus of famous chefs. In the past, some people ridiculed food trucks, calling them “roach coaches,” suggesting a lack of cleanliness, but now contemporary residents refer to the elaborate trucks as a new cultural phenomenon and order foods such

as Vietnamese *bánh mì* (a baguette with ingredients such as pork, cucumbers, fresh cilantro, sweet pickled carrots, daikon radish, cilantro, and chili peppers), Korean short-rib tacos and kimchi dogs, Brazilian barbecue, Greek sausages, Indian dosas, baklava (a popular dessert in Greece and Albania), and many other culturally diverse foods.

Now that the U.S. population is more culturally diverse, younger generations are enjoying a wider variety of tastes and textures in their food choices, and the explosion of social media makes it possible for potential customers to know the exact location and daily menus of their favorite food trucks. People have also become more aware that the food we eat is intricately intertwined with culture and with our own personal identities regarding race, ethnicity, religion, class, gender, age, and many other social characteristics and attributes. For all of us, the food we consume is linked to our individual identity and to the larger culture of which we are a part.

In this chapter we examine society and culture, with special attention given to how our material culture, including the food we eat, is related to our beliefs, values, and actions. We also analyze culture from functionalist, conflict, symbolic interactionist, and postmodern perspectives. Before reading on, test your knowledge of the relationship among food, its distribution, and the culture in which we live by answering the questions in “Sociology and Everyday Life.” ●

was to the cuisine they served, and where they saw themselves and their trucks fitting into the bigger picture of New Haven life. Then the students created maps that reflected patterns of cultural diversity and food consumption in New Haven. According to the students, the food truck movement helps to “illustrate the importance of migration to the city of New Haven

and the various cultural and social networks that exist throughout the city” (*Yale News*, 2013).

What do you think you might learn about food and culture if you participated in a similar project in your own city? Has the food truck trend helped to spread cultural awareness? Why or why not?

How Much Do You Know About Global Food and Culture?

TRUE	FALSE	
T	F	1 Cheese is a universal food enjoyed by people of all nations and cultures.
T	F	2 Giving round-shaped foods to the parents of new babies is considered to be lucky in some cultures.
T	F	3 Wedding cakes are made of similar ingredients in all countries, regardless of culture or religion.
T	F	4 Food is an important part of religious observance for many different faiths.
T	F	5 In authentic Chinese cuisine, cooking methods are divided into “yin” and “yang” qualities.
T	F	6 Because of the fast pace of life in the United States, virtually everyone relies on mixes and instant foods at home and fast foods when eating out.
T	F	7 Potatoes are the most popular mainstay in the diet of first- and second-generation immigrants who have arrived in the United States over the past 40 years.
T	F	8 According to sociologists, individuals may be offended when a person from another culture does not understand local food preferences or the cultural traditions associated with eating, even if the person is obviously an “outsider” or a “tourist.”

Answers can be found at the end of the chapter.

Culture and Society in a Changing World

What is culture? **Culture** is the knowledge, language, values, customs, and material objects that are passed from person to person and from one generation to the next in a human group or society. As previously defined, a *society* is a large social grouping that occupies the same geographic territory and is subject to the same political authority and dominant cultural expectations. Whereas a society is composed of people, a culture is composed of ideas, behavior, and material possessions. Society and culture are interdependent; neither could exist without the other.

How important is culture in determining how people think and act on a daily basis? Simply stated, culture is essential for our individual survival and our communication with other people. We rely on culture because we are not born with the information we need to survive. We do not know how to take care of ourselves, how to behave, how to dress, what to eat, which gods to worship, or how to make or spend money. We must learn about culture through

interaction, observation, and imitation in order to participate as members of the group. Sharing a common culture with others simplifies day-to-day interactions. However, we must also understand other cultures and the worldviews therein.

Just as culture is essential for individuals, it is also fundamental for the survival of societies. Culture has been described as the common foundation or core that makes individuals understandable to the larger group of which they are a part. Some system of rule making and enforcing necessarily exists in all societies. What would happen, for example, if *all* rules and laws in the United States suddenly disappeared? At a basic level, we need rules in order to navigate our bicycles and cars through traffic. At a more abstract level, we need rules to establish and protect our rights.

culture

the knowledge, language, values, customs, and material objects that are passed from person to person and from one generation to the next in a human group or society.

In order to survive, societies need rules about civility and tolerance. We are not born knowing how to express certain kinds of feelings toward others. When a person shows kindness or hatred toward another individual, some people may say “Well, that’s just human nature” when explaining this behavior. Such a statement is built on the assumption that what we do as human beings is determined by *nature* (our biological and genetic makeup) rather than *nurture* (our social environment)—in other words, that our behavior is instinctive. An *instinct* is an unlearned, biologically determined behavior pattern common to all members of a species that predictably occurs whenever certain environmental conditions exist. For example, spiders do not learn to build webs. They build webs because of instincts that are triggered by basic biological needs such as protection and reproduction.

Culture is similar to instincts in animals because it helps us deal with everyday life. Although people may have some instincts, what we most often think of as instinctive behavior can actually be attributed to reflexes and drives. A *reflex* is an unlearned, biologically determined involuntary response to some physical stimuli (such as a sneeze after breathing some pepper in through the nose or the blinking of an eye when a speck of dust gets in it). *Drives* are unlearned, biologically determined impulses common to all members of a species that satisfy needs such as those for sleep, food, water, or sexual gratification. Reflexes and drives do not determine how people will behave in human societies; even the expression of these biological characteristics is channeled by culture. For example, we may be taught that the “appropriate” way to sneeze (an involuntary response) is to use a tissue, turn our head away from others, or to sneeze or cough into our sleeve (learned responses). Similarly, we may learn to sleep on mats or in beds. Most contemporary sociologists agree that culture and social learning, not nature, account for virtually all of our behavior patterns.

Because humans cannot rely on instincts in order to survive, culture is a “tool kit” for survival (Swidler, 1986). From this approach, culture serves as a tool kit full of abstract things such as our beliefs and rituals, symbols, personal narratives, and overall perspectives on the world. People use these in a variety of configurations to help solve the problems they face. The tools we choose vary according to our own personality and the situations we face. We are not puppets on a string; we make choices from among the items in our own “tool kit.”

Material Culture and Nonmaterial Culture

Our cultural tool kit is divided into two major parts: material culture and nonmaterial culture. **Material culture** consists of the physical or tangible creations that members of a society make, use, and share. Initially, items of material culture begin as raw materials or resources such as ore, trees, and oil. Through technology,

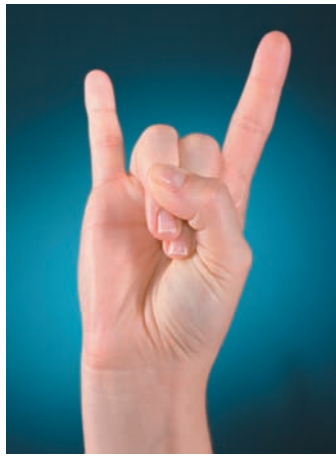
these raw materials are transformed into usable items, ranging from books and computers to guns and tanks. Technology is both concrete and abstract. For example, technology includes computers, smartphones, iPads and other tablets, and the knowledge and skills necessary to use them. At the most basic level, material culture is important because it is our buffer against the environment. For example, we create shelter to protect ourselves from the weather and to give ourselves privacy. Beyond the survival level, we make, use, and share objects that are interesting and important to us. Why are you wearing the clothes you have on today? Perhaps you’re communicating something about yourself, such as where you attend school, what you are majoring in at college or university, what sports teams you support, what kind of music you like, where you went on vacation last summer, or something that you saw and liked online.

Nonmaterial culture consists of the abstract or intangible human creations of society that influence people’s behavior. Language, beliefs, values, rules of behavior, family patterns, and political systems are examples of nonmaterial culture. Even the gestures that we use in daily conversation are part of the nonmaterial culture in a society. As many international travelers and businesspeople have learned, it is important to know what gestures mean in various nations (see ■ Figure 2.1). Although the “hook ’em Horns” sign—the pinky and index finger raised up and the middle two fingers folded down—is used by fans to express their support for the University of Texas at Austin sports teams, for millions of Italians the same gesture means “Your spouse is being unfaithful.” In Argentina, rotating one’s index finger around the front of the ear means “You have a telephone call,” but in the United States it usually suggests that a person is “crazy.” Similarly, making a circle with your thumb and index finger indicates “OK” in the United States, but in Tunisia it means “I’ll kill you.”

As the example of hand gestures shows, a central component of nonmaterial culture is **beliefs**—the mental acceptance or conviction that certain things are true or real. Beliefs may be based on tradition, faith, experience, scientific research, or some combination of these. Faith in a Supreme Being and trust in another person are examples of beliefs. We may also have a belief in items of material culture. When we travel by airplane, for instance, we believe that it is possible to fly at between 31,000 and 38,000 feet in the sky on a commercial airline and arrive at our destination even though we know that we could not have done this without the airplane itself.

Cultural Universals

Because all humans face the same basic needs (such as for food, clothing, and shelter), we engage in similar activities that contribute to our survival. Classical anthropologist George Murdock (1945: 124) compiled a list of more than seventy **cultural universals**—customs and practices



Gabriela Trojanowska/Shutterstock.com

a. HORNS: "Hook 'em Horns" or "Your spouse is unfaithful."



Anna Volgina/Shutterstock.com

b. SHAKA SIGN: A greeting when initially seeing someone or a parting when they leave. Also used to express approval or to show solidarity.



Oplar/Shutterstock.com

c. THUMBS UP: "Great" or an obscenity.

FIGURE 2.1 Hand Gestures with Different Meanings

As international travelers and businesspeople have learned, hand gestures may have very different meanings in different cultures.

that occur across all societies. His categories included appearance (such as clothing and hairstyles), activities (such as sports, dancing, games, joking, and visiting), social institutions (such as family, law, and religion), and customary practices (such as cooking, folklore, gift giving, and hospitality). Whereas these general customs and practices may be *present* in all cultures, their specific *forms* vary from one group to another and from one time to another within the same group. For example, although telling jokes may be a universal practice, what is considered to be "funny" in one society may be considered an insult in another culture. The same is true of the hand gestures we previously discussed. The "OK" sign in the United States is a circle made with the thumb and forefinger, but in parts of Europe, this same gesture may mean that the person you're making the gesture to is a "zero" or a "nothing." Even worse, in Brazil this hand gesture may be considered rude, crude, and socially unacceptable.

What do you think constitutes a cultural universal and what purpose do they serve? In terms of their functions, cultural universals are useful because they ensure the smooth and continual operation of society. A society must meet basic human needs by providing food, shelter, and some degree of safety for its members so that they will survive (■ Figure 2.2). Children and other new members (such as immigrants) often try to learn the ways of the dominant group so that they are successful in school or find a job. Cultural universals help fulfill these important functions of society.

From another perspective, however, cultural universals are not always the result of functional necessity. The members of a society may *impose* these practices on

members of another culture to assert their own privilege or show that they have power over the other people. Historically, similar customs and practices among wide categories of people do not necessarily constitute cultural universals they all share of their own choosing. Sharing cultural universals may be an indication that a conquering nation or dominant group of people has used their power to enforce certain types of behavior upon those whom they defeated or are holding in their custody, such as recent undocumented immigrants and asylum-seekers at the U.S. border who are being held in detention facilities. Sociologists who study such issues ask research questions such as "Who determines the dominant cultural patterns?" For example, although religion is a cultural universal, traditional religious practices of indigenous peoples (those who first live in an area) have often been repressed and even stamped out by subsequent settlers or conquerors that possess political and economic power over them.

material culture

the physical or tangible creations that members of a society make, use, and share.

nonmaterial culture

the abstract or intangible human creations of society that influence people's behavior.

beliefs

the mental acceptance or conviction that certain things are true or real.

cultural universals

customs and practices that occur across all societies.



xavierarnau/E+/Getty Images



Franz Lemmens/Photographer's Choice/Getty Images



Eddie Gerald/Alamy Stock Photo

FIGURE 2.2 Food is a universal type of material culture, but what people eat and how they eat it vary widely, as shown in these cross-cultural examples from the United Arab Emirates (top), the Netherlands (middle), and China (bottom).

Components of Culture

Even though the specifics of individual cultures vary widely, all cultures have four common nonmaterial cultural components: symbols, language, values, and norms. These components contribute to both harmony and strife in a society.

Symbols

A **symbol** is anything that meaningfully represents something else. Culture could not exist without symbols because there would be no shared meanings among people. Symbols can simultaneously produce loyalty and animosity, and love and hate. They help us communicate ideas such as love or patriotism because they express abstract concepts with visible objects (■ Figure 2.3). For example, flags can stand for patriotism, nationalism, school spirit, or religious beliefs held by members of a group or society. Symbols can stand for love (a heart on a valentine), peace (a dove), or discrimination and hate (a noose or Nazi swastika), just as words can be used to convey these meanings. Symbols can also transmit other types of ideas. A siren is a symbol that denotes an emergency situation and sends the message to clear the way immediately. Gestures are also a symbolic form of communication—a movement of the head, body, or hands can express our ideas or feelings to others. For example, in the United States, pointing toward your chest with your thumb or finger is a symbol for “me.”

Symbols affect our thoughts about socioeconomic class. For example, how a person is dressed or the kind of car that he or she drives is often at least subconsciously used as a measure of that individual’s economic standing or position (■ Figure 2.4). With regard to clothing, although many people wear casual clothes on a daily basis, where the clothing was purchased is sometimes used as a symbol of social status. Were the items purchased at Walmart, Old Navy, Forever 21, or Neiman Marcus? Many stores, such as Target, have become very aware of this distinction and now use well-known, high-end designers to create classy but less-expensive clothing with their names on the product to draw in shoppers from all socioeconomic levels. Automobiles and their logos are also symbols that have cultural meaning beyond the shopping environment in which they originate.

Finally, symbols may be specific to a given culture and have special meaning to individuals who share that culture but not necessarily to other people. Consider, for example, the use of certain foods to celebrate the Chinese New Year: Bamboo shoots and black-moss seaweed both represent wealth; peanuts and noodles symbolize a long life; and tangerines represent good luck. In countries throughout the world, food and drink are powerful symbols of the history and cultural identity of people residing in the area. With globalization, many of these symbols have gained worldwide acceptance among people with no previous history or identity with a specific nation or culture.



Buccina Studios/Photodisc/Getty Images



Grant Rooney Premium/Alamy Stock Photo



Natalie Foley/Corbis

FIGURE 2.3 The customs and rituals associated with weddings are one example of nonmaterial culture. What can you infer about beliefs and attitudes concerning marriage in the societies represented by these photographs?

Language

Language is a set of symbols that expresses ideas and enables people to think and communicate with one another. Verbal (spoken) language and nonverbal (written or gestured) language help us describe reality. One of our most important human attributes is the ability to use language to share our experiences, feelings, and knowledge with others. Language can create visual images in our head, such as describing small white kittens as looking like “snowballs.” Language also allows people to distinguish themselves from outsiders and maintain group boundaries and solidarity.

Language is not solely a human characteristic. Other animals use sounds, gestures, touch, and smell to communicate with one another, but they use signals with fixed meanings that are limited to the immediate situation (the present) and that usually cannot encompass past or future situations. For example, chimpanzees can use elements of American Sign Language and manipulate physical objects to make “sentences,” but they are not physically endowed with the vocal apparatus needed to form the consonants required for oral language. As a result, nonhuman animals cannot transmit the more complex aspects of culture to their offspring. As a dog-parent, I have looked into research about how many words an average dog can understand and found that researchers estimate that doggy vocabulary probably ranges from about 165 to 200 words. Many of us who have pets are sure that our animals have even larger vocabularies than that, but they may also be looking to us for other visual (but nonverbal) cues about what we want them to do or what we are offering them (food, treats, toys, etc.).



Mr. Whiskey/Shutterstock.com

FIGURE 2.4 Although millions of people use smartphones such as the one shown here, researchers have identified a digital divide between the “haves” and “have nots” both in the United States and worldwide.

symbol

anything that meaningfully represents something else.

language

a set of symbols that expresses ideas and enables people to think and communicate with one another.

Humans have a unique ability to manipulate symbols to express abstract concepts and rules, and thus to create and transmit culture from one generation to the next. The extent to which animals teach each other skills such as how to survive is debated among some scholars, but Internet search engines are full of websites showing older animals passing on various forms of learning to other animals, but this may often be through observation rather than language skills.

Language and Social Reality Does language *create* reality or simply *communicate* it? Anthropological linguists Edward Sapir and Benjamin Whorf have suggested that language not only expresses our thoughts and perceptions but also influences our perception of reality. According to the now-classic *Sapir-Whorf hypothesis*, language shapes the view of reality of its speakers (Sapir, 1961; Whorf, 1956). If people are able to think only through language, then language must precede thought. If language actually shapes the reality that we perceive and experience, then some aspects of the world are viewed as important and others are virtually neglected because people know the world only in terms of the vocabulary and grammar of their own language.

If language does create reality, does our language trap us? Many social scientists argue that the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis overstates the relationship between language and our thoughts and behavior patterns. Although they acknowledge that language has many subtle meanings and that words used by people reflect their central concerns, most sociologists contend that language may *influence* our behavior and interpretation of social reality but does not *determine* it.

Language and Gender How are language and gender related? What cultural assumptions about women and men does language reflect? Scholars have suggested several ways in which language and gender are intertwined:

- The English language traditionally has ignored women by using the masculine form to refer to human beings in general. For example, the word *man* has been used generically in words such as *chairman* and *mankind*, which allegedly include both men and women. More recently, demands for changes in wording have reduced, but not eliminated, the use of male-dominated language in all spheres of social life.
- Use of the pronouns *he* and *she* affects our thinking about gender. Pronouns show the gender of the person we *expect* to be in a particular occupation. For instance, nurses, secretaries, and schoolteachers are usually referred to as *she*, but doctors, engineers, electricians, and presidents are usually referred to as *he*.
- Words have positive connotations when relating to male power, prestige, and leadership; when relating to women, they carry negative overtones such as being overbearing, bossy, or otherwise unpleasant at one's acquaintances, family members, or coworkers.
 - Table 2.1 shows how gender-based language reflects the traditional acceptance of men and

TABLE 2.1 Language and Gender

Male Term	Female Term	Neutral Term
Teacher	Teacher	Teacher
Chairman	Chairwoman	Chair, chairperson
Congressman	Congresswoman	Representative
Policeman	Policewoman	Police officer
Fireman	Female fireman	Firefighter
Airline steward	Airline stewardess	Flight attendant
Race car driver	Female race car driver	Race car driver
Professor	Teacher/female professor	Professor
Doctor	Female doctor	Doctor
Bachelor	Bachelorette	Single person
Male prostitute	Prostitute	Prostitute
Welfare recipient	Welfare mother	Welfare recipient
Worker/employee	Working mother	Worker/employee
Janitor/maintenance man	Maid/cleaning lady	Custodial attendant

Sources: Adapted from Korsmeyer, 1981: 122; Miller and Swift, 1991.

women in certain positions, implying that the jobs are different when filled by women rather than men (see also ■ Figure 2.5). Once again, as more women enter previously male-dominated organizations and professions, the language often starts to change to reflect a more gender-neutral acceptance of both men and women.

- A language-based predisposition to think about women in sexual terms reinforces the notion that women are sexual objects. Terms such as *fox*, *broad*, *bitch*, *babe*, and *doll* often describe women, which ascribe childlike or even petlike characteristics to them. By contrast, men have performance pressures placed on them by being defined in terms of their sexual prowess, such as *dude*, *stud*, and *hunk*.

Gender in language has been debated and studied extensively for many years now, and some changes have occurred. The preference of many women to be called *Ms.* (rather than *Miss* or *Mrs.* in reference to their marital status) has received a large degree of acceptance in public life and the media. Many organizations and publications have guidelines for the use of nonsexist language and have changed titles such as *chairman* to *chair* or *chairperson*. To develop a more inclusive and equitable society, many analysts suggest that a still more inclusive language is needed.



RosaleneBatancourt 9/Alamy Stock Photo

FIGURE 2.5 Certain jobs are stereotypically considered to be “men’s jobs.” Other occupations are seen as “women’s jobs.” Is your perception of a male flight attendant the same as your perception of a female flight attendant? Why or why not?

Language, Race, and Ethnicity Language may create and reinforce our perceptions of race and ethnicity by transmitting preconceived ideas about the superiority of one category of people over another. Let’s look at a few images conveyed by words in the English language in regard to race/ethnicity:

- Words may have more than one meaning and create and/or reinforce negative images. In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, terms such as *black-hearted* (malevolent) and expressions such as a *black mark* (a detrimental fact) and *Chinaman’s chance of success* (unlikely to succeed) were used to associate the words *black* and *Chinaman* with derogatory imagery. Although these terms are seldom used today, they are occasionally referenced in cartoons, other popular culture, and politically derogatory speeches.
- Overtly derogatory terms such as *nigger*, *kike*, *gook*, *honky*, *chink*, *spic*, and other racial–ethnic slurs have been “popularized” in all forms of media, comedy routines, and so on. Such derogatory terms are often used in conjunction with physical threats against persons.
- Words are frequently used to create or reinforce perceptions about a group. For example, in the past, Native Americans were sometimes referred to as “savage” or “primitive.”
- The “voice” of verbs may minimize or incorrectly identify the activities or achievements of people of color. For example, the use of the passive voice in the statement “African Americans *were given* the right to vote” ignores how African Americans *fought* for that right. Active-voice verbs may also inaccurately attribute achievements to people or groups. Some historians argue that cultural bias is shown by the very notion that “Columbus discovered America”—given that America was already inhabited by people who later became known as Native Americans.

In addition to these concerns about the English language, problems can arise when more than one language is involved. Across the nation, the question of whether the United States should have an “official” language continues to surface. Some people believe that there is no need to designate an official language; other people believe that English should be designated as the official language and that the use of any other language in official government business should be discouraged or negatively sanctioned. By 2018, thirty-two states (see ■ Figure 2.6) had passed laws that require that all public documents, records, legislation, and regulations, as well as hearings, official ceremonies, and public meetings, be written or conducted solely in English (usenglish.org, 2019).

Are deep-seated social and cultural issues embedded in social policy decisions such as these? Although the United States has always been a nation of immigrants, in recent decades this country has experienced rapid changes in population that have brought about greater diversity in languages and cultures. Recent data gathered by the U.S. Census Bureau indicate that although 78.2 percent of the people in this country speak only English at home, 21.8 percent speak a language other than English. Spanish is the language most frequently used at home by non-English speakers (see ■ Figure 2.7).

The Census for Immigration Studies found that 67 million individuals do not speak English at home. This amount has nearly doubled over the past three decades. In addition, another 25.9 million people (39 percent) stated that they spoke English “less than very well.” In the five largest U.S. cities (New York City, Houston, Los Angeles, Chicago, and Phoenix), nearly half (48 percent) of all residents speak a language other than English at home. In Los Angeles, 59 percent of residents speak a language other than English at home as compared to New York City and Houston at 49 percent, Phoenix at 38 percent, and Chicago at 36 percent (Bedard, 2018). Some English-only speakers feel threatened by the significant change in language usage in this country and engage in debates and political referendums trying to protect English as the official U.S. language that should be read and spoken by everyone.

Why are so many people concerned about language and who speaks what language at home, school, or other public spaces? One reason is that language is an important means of cultural transmission. Through language, children and sometimes adults alike learn about their cultural heritage and develop a sense of personal identity in relation to their group. For example, Latinx (a newer, gender-neutral or nonbinary alternative to the terms “Latino” or “Latina” that designates a person of Latin American origin or descent) in New Mexico and south Texas use *dichos*—proverbs or sayings that are unique to the Spanish language—as

Sapir–Whorf hypothesis

the proposition that language shapes the view of reality of its speakers.

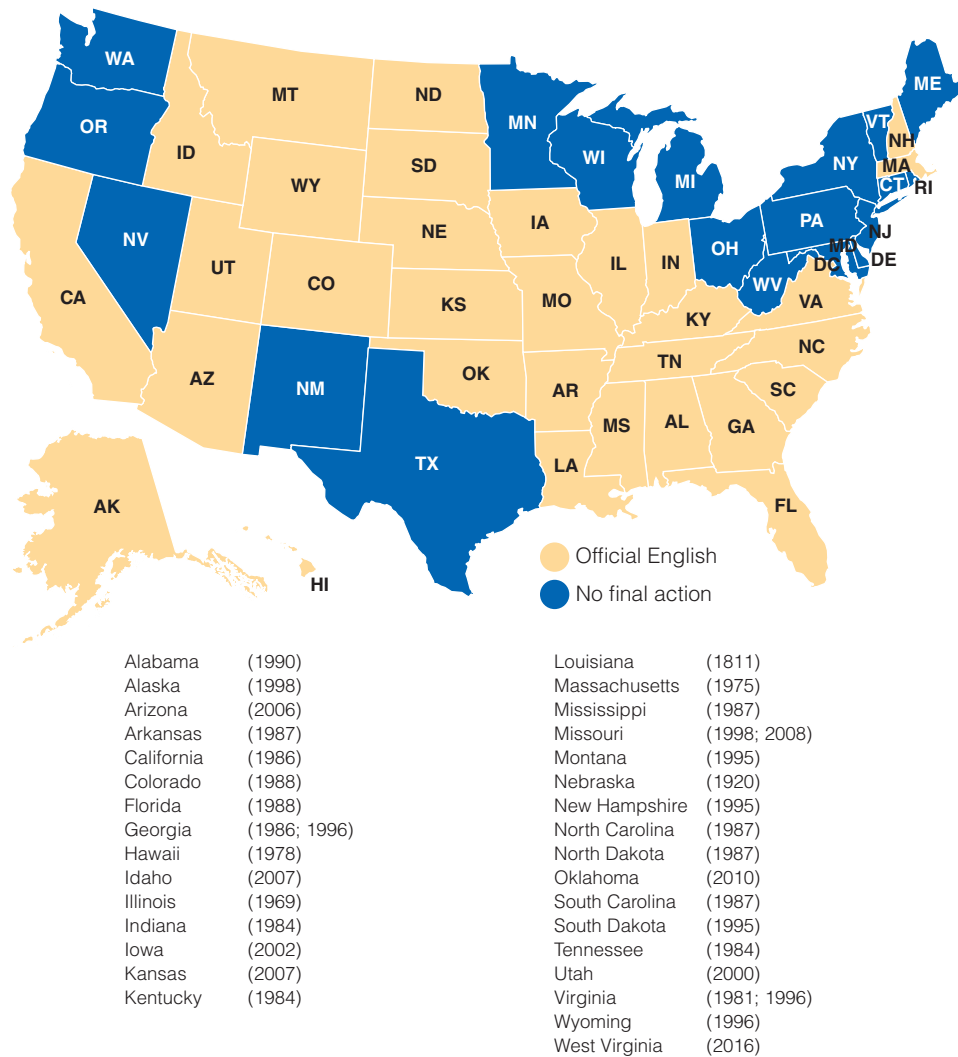


FIGURE 2.6 States with Official English Laws

Why do some states have official English laws while others do not? How does the composition of the population in each state affect the passage of laws regarding language? Do you see any similarities in the states that have official English laws versus those that don't? What conclusions can you draw from this map?

Source: usenglish.org, 2019.

a means of expressing themselves and as a reflection of their cultural heritage. Examples of *dichos* include “*Anda tu camino sin ayuda de vecino*” (“Walk your own road without the help of a neighbor”) and “*Amor de lejos es para pendejos*” (“A long-distance romance is for fools”). *Dichos* are passed from generation to generation as a priceless verbal tradition whereby people can give advice or teach a lesson.

Language is also a source of power and social control; language perpetuates inequalities between people and between groups because words are sometimes used (either intentionally or unintentionally) to “keep people in their place.” As linguist Deborah Tannen (1993: B5) suggested about thirty years ago, “The devastating group hatreds that result in so much suffering in our own country and around the world are related in origin to the

small intolerances in our everyday conversations—our readiness to attribute good intentions to ourselves and bad intentions to others.” This statement remains true in the contentious political and social arena in which we find ourselves entering the third decade of the twenty-first century. Language is still a very strong reflection of our own feelings and values as well as how we judge other people.

Values

Values are collective ideas about what is right or wrong, good or bad, and desirable or undesirable in a particular culture. Values do not dictate which behaviors are appropriate and which ones are not, but they provide us with the criteria by which we evaluate people, objects, and events.

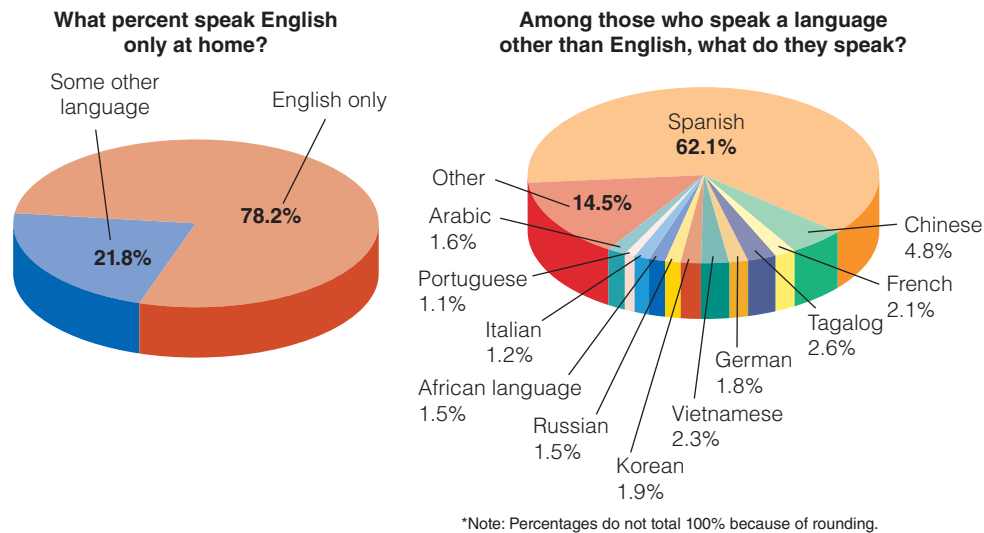


FIGURE 2.7 Languages Spoken at Home, Other Than English
Source: Inghram, 2018.

Values typically come in pairs of positive and negative values, such as being brave or cowardly, hardworking or lazy. Because we use values to justify our behavior, we tend to defend them staunchly.

Core American Values Do we have shared values in the United States? Sociologists disagree about the extent to which all people in this country share a core set of values. Functionalists tend to believe that shared values are essential for the maintenance of a society, and scholars using a functionalist approach have conducted most of the research on core values. Analysts who focus on the importance of core values maintain that the values identified by classical sociologist Robin M. Williams, Jr. in the 1970s remain important to people in the United States today. How important do you think the following ten values are?

1. *Individualism.* People are responsible for their own success or failure. Those who do not succeed have only themselves to blame because of their lack of ability, laziness, immorality, or other character flaws.
2. *Achievement and success.* Personal achievement results from successful competition with others. Individuals are encouraged to do better than others in school and to work in order to gain wealth, power, and prestige. Material possessions are seen as a sign of personal achievement.
3. *Activity and work.* People who are industrious are praised for their achievement; those perceived as lazy are ridiculed. From the time of the early Puritans, work has been viewed as important. Even during their leisure time, many people “work” in their play. For example, think of all the people who run in marathons, repair or restore cars, and so on in their spare time (■Figure 2.8).

4. *Science and technology.* People in the United States have a great deal of faith in science and technology. They expect scientific and technological advances ultimately to control nature, the aging process, and even death.
5. *Progress and material comfort.* The material comforts of life include not only basic necessities (such as adequate shelter, nutrition, and medical care) but also the goods and services that make life easier and more pleasant.
6. *Efficiency and practicality.* People want things to be bigger, better, and faster. As a result, great value is placed on efficiency (“How well does it work?”).
7. *Equality.* Since colonial times, overt class distinctions have been rejected in the United States. However, *equality* has been defined as “equality of opportunity”—an assumed equal chance to achieve success—not as “equality of outcome.”
8. *Morality and humanitarianism.* Aiding others, especially following natural disasters (such as fires, hurricanes, and earthquakes), is seen as a value. The notion of helping others was originally a part of religious teachings and tied to the idea of morality. Today, people engage in humanitarian acts without necessarily perceiving that it is the “moral” thing to do.
9. *Freedom and liberty.* Individual freedom is highly valued in the United States. The idea of freedom includes the right to private ownership of property,

values

collective ideas about what is right or wrong, good or bad, and desirable or undesirable in a particular culture.



Rena Schild/Shutterstock.com

FIGURE 2.8 Even during their leisure time, many people “work” in their play.

the ability to engage in private enterprise, freedom of the press, and other freedoms considered to be “basic” rights.

10. **Ethnocentrism and group superiority.** People value their own racial or ethnic group above all others. Such feelings of pride and superiority may lead to discrimination; in the past, slavery and segregation laws were an example. Many people also believe in the superiority of this country and that “the American way of life” is best.

Overall, it appears that core values are an important component of culture in all societies but that over time, they tend to shift based on economic conditions, social trends, religious beliefs, and other factors that arise in those nations and around the globe.

Value Contradictions All countries, including the United States, have value contradictions. **Value contradictions** are values that conflict with one another or are mutually exclusive (meaning that achieving one value makes it difficult, if not impossible, to achieve another). Core values of morality and humanitarianism may conflict with values of individual achievement and success. For example, humanitarian values reflected in welfare and other

government-aid programs for people in need can come into conflict with values emphasizing hard work and personal achievement.

Ideal Culture versus Real Culture What is the relationship between values and human behavior? Sociologists stress that a gap always exists between ideal culture and real culture in a society. *Ideal culture* refers to the values and standards of behavior that people in a society profess to hold. *Real culture* refers to the values and standards of behavior that people actually follow. For example, we may claim to be law-abiding (ideal cultural value) but may regularly drive over the speed limit (real cultural behavior) and still think of ourselves as “good citizens.” We may believe in the value of honesty and, at the same time, engage in cheating or plagiarism in school and other forms of deception.

Norms

Values provide ideals or beliefs about behavior but do not state explicitly how we should behave. Norms, on the other hand, do have specific behavioral expectations. **Norms** are established rules of behavior or standards of conduct. *Prescriptive norms* state what behavior is appropriate or

SOCIOLOGY IN **Global Perspective**

What Do Cultural Norms Say About Drinking Behavior?

In the United States, most of us are familiar with norms and rituals associated with alcohol consumption and/or drinking behavior. Some norms are formal, such as laws that set forth the legal age at which young people may consume alcoholic beverages. Other drinking norms are informal, such as whether champagne, wine, or beer should be served at a wedding celebration. Let's take a brief look at the Republic of Georgia, where highly formalized norms have been established regarding the consumption of wine at meals. Many of these norms date back more than 7,000 years in this ancient wine region (Salcito, 2014).

In the Republic of Georgia, people participate in celebratory and memorial occasions known as *supras*—feasts or banquets. More formal *supras* take place at holidays or significant events, such as birthdays, weddings, baptisms, or funerals. Less formal *supras* mark the gathering of friends and family to enjoy food, music, and dancing while engaging in ritualized wine drinking that marks one's personal and national identity, as well as his or her place in the social hierarchy.

The norms of eating are more informal at the *supra*, but the drinking norms are strictly formal, starting with the first toast, which sets the character, structure, and meaning of what is being celebrated or mourned (Muehlfried, 2007). Georgian wine cannot be consumed without first having an eloquent speech given by the *tamada*, or toastmaster, who must adhere to strict rules of etiquette to ensure that honor is appropriately distributed to the guests. The *tamada* must be able to give extensive toasts, share humorous stories, and state and control the order and duration of each part of the evening. It is also important who drinks when and how much because such details demonstrate people's status. When a toast is given to women or the deceased, for example, women and children remain seated, but boys of a certain age must stand up to show that they have become men. Older men who no longer participate in drinking and toasting typically lose their status as head of the family (Muehlfried, 2007).



The Republic of Georgia

Why do Georgians maintain these cultural norms governing *supras* across centuries and generations? In the past, such norms may have helped Georgians hold on to their cultural identity when they were overtaken by other nations, such as Russia. Today, some social scientists believe that these norms and rituals continue to help people in Georgia maintain their identity and cultural heritage in the face of rapid social change and globalization (Muehlfried, 2007).

Reflect & Analyze

Can you think of eating or drinking norms that are specific to your family's national, religious, or racial-ethnic traditions? What about those of your friends or acquaintances? Do these norms contribute to your identity and social interaction patterns?

acceptable. For example, persons making a certain amount of money are expected to file a tax return and pay any taxes they owe. Norms based on custom direct us to open a door for a person carrying a heavy load or give up our seat for an elderly person on a bus. By contrast, *proscriptive norms* state what behavior is inappropriate or unacceptable. Laws that prohibit us from driving over the speed limit or professors' requirements that preclude us from texting or using social networking sites during class are examples. Prescriptive and proscriptive norms operate at all levels of society, from our everyday actions to the formulation of laws.

Formal and Informal Norms Not all norms are of equal importance; those that are most crucial are formalized. *Formal norms* are written down and involve specific punishments for violators. Laws are the most common

value contradictions

values that conflict with one another or are mutually exclusive.

norms

established rules of behavior or standards of conduct.

type of formal norms; they have been codified and may be enforced by sanctions. **Sanctions** are rewards for appropriate behavior or penalties for inappropriate behavior. Examples of *positive sanctions* include praise, honors, or medals for conformity to specific norms. *Negative sanctions* range from mild disapproval to the death penalty.

Norms that are considered to be less important are referred to as *informal norms*—unwritten standards of behavior understood by people who share a common identity. When individuals violate informal norms, other people may apply informal sanctions. *Informal sanctions* are not clearly defined and can be applied by any member of a group (such as frowning at someone or making a negative comment or gesture). Around the world, people of all nations have formal and informal norms that are unique to their culture and way of life (see “Sociology in Global Perspective”).

Folkways Norms are also classified according to their relative social importance. **Folkways** are informal norms or everyday customs that may be violated without serious consequences within a particular culture. They provide rules for conduct but are not considered to be essential to society’s survival (■Figure 2.9). In the United States, folkways among some people include using deodorant, brushing our teeth, and wearing appropriate clothing for a specific occasion. Today, folkways often are not agreed upon or enforced. When they are enforced, the resulting negative sanctions tend to be informal and relatively mild.

Mores Other norms are considered to be highly essential to the stability of society even though they are not laws. **Mores** (pronounced MOR-ays) are strongly held norms with moral and ethical connotations that may not be violated without serious consequences in a particular culture. Because mores are based on cultural values and are considered to be crucial to the well-being of the group, violators are subject to more severe negative sanctions (such as ridicule or loss of employment) than are those who fail to adhere to folkways. The strongest mores are referred to as taboos. **Taboos** are mores so strong that their violation is considered to be extremely offensive and even unmentionable. Violation of taboos is punishable by the group or even, according to certain belief systems, by a supernatural force. The incest taboo, which prohibits sexual or marital relations between certain categories of kin, is an example of a nearly universal taboo. In the United States, mores are considered to be informal norms unless they officially become laws.

Laws **Laws** are formal, standardized norms that have been enacted by legislatures and are enforced by formal sanctions. Laws may be either civil or criminal. *Civil law* deals with disputes among persons or groups. Persons who lose civil suits may encounter negative sanctions such as having to pay compensation to the other party or being ordered to stop certain conduct. *Criminal law*, on the other hand, deals with public safety and well-being. When criminal laws are violated, fines and prison sentences are the most likely negative sanctions, although in some states the death penalty is handed down for certain major offenses.

Technology, Cultural Change, and Diversity

Cultures do not generally remain static. There are many forces working toward change and diversity. Some societies and individuals adapt to this change, whereas others suffer culture shock and succumb to ethnocentrism.

Cultural Change

Societies continually experience cultural change at both material and nonmaterial levels. Changes in technology continue to shape the material culture of society. **Technology** refers to the knowledge, techniques, and tools that allow people to transform resources into usable forms and the knowledge and skills required to use them after they are developed. Although most technological changes are primarily modifications of existing technology, *new technologies* refers to changes that make a significant difference in many people’s lives. Examples of new technologies include the introduction of the printing press nearly 600 years ago and the advent of computers and electronic communications in the twentieth century. The pace of technological change has increased rapidly in the past 150 years, as contrasted with the 4,000 years prior to that, during which humans advanced from digging sticks and hoes to the plow.

All parts of culture do not change at the same pace. When a change occurs in the material culture of a society, nonmaterial culture must adapt to that change. Frequently, this rate of change is uneven, resulting in a gap between the two. Classical sociologist William F. Ogburn (1966/1922) referred to this disparity as *cultural lag*, which is a gap between the technical development of a



FIGURE 2.9 Folkways—such as how to behave in a crowded elevator—provide rules for conduct but are not considered to be essential to society’s survival.

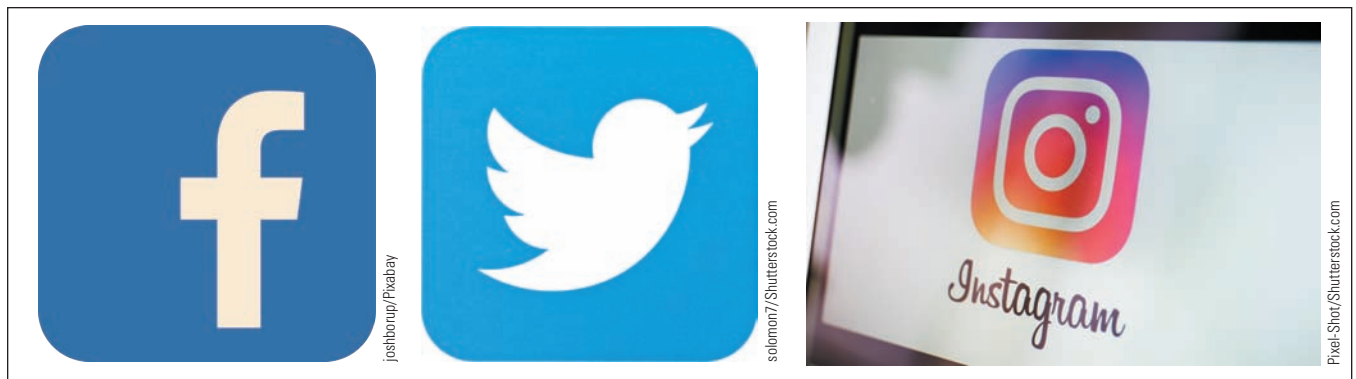


FIGURE 2.10 Facebook and other social network sites are examples of cultural lag—a gap between technology and a society’s morals and laws. Increased use of information communication technologies has transformed how we communicate with each other but also raised important moral and legal concerns about our privacy rights as users.

society and its moral and legal institutions (■Figure 2.10). In other words, cultural lag occurs when material culture changes faster than nonmaterial culture, thus creating a lag between the two cultural components. For example, at the material cultural level the personal computer and electronic coding have made it possible to create a unique health identifier for each person in the United States. Based on available technology (material culture), it is possible to create a national data bank that would include everyone’s individual medical records from birth to death. Using this identifier, health providers and insurance companies could rapidly transfer medical records around the globe, and researchers could access unlimited data on people’s diseases, test results, and treatments. However, the availability of this technology does not mean that it will be accepted by people who believe (nonmaterial culture) that such a national data bank would constitute an invasion of privacy and could easily be abused by others. The failure of nonmaterial culture to keep pace with material culture is linked to social conflict and societal problems. As in the above example, such changes are often set in motion by discovery, invention, and diffusion.

Discovery is the process of learning about something previously unknown or unrecognized. Historically, discovery involved unearthing natural elements or existing realities, such as “discovering” fire or the true shape of Earth. Today, discovery most often results from scientific research. For example, the discovery of a polio vaccine virtually eliminated one of the major childhood diseases. A future discovery of a cure for cancer or the common cold could result in longer and more productive lives for many people.

As more discoveries have occurred, people have been able to reconfigure existing material and nonmaterial cultural items through invention. *Invention* is the process of reshaping existing cultural items into a new form. Guns, airplanes, TVs, and digital devices are examples of inventions that positively or negatively affect our lives today.

When diverse groups of people come into contact, they begin to adapt one another’s discoveries, inventions, and ideas for their own use. *Diffusion* is the transmission of cultural items or social practices from one group or society to

another through such means as exploration, war, the media, tourism, and immigration. Today, cultural diffusion moves at a very rapid pace in the global economy.

Cultural Diversity

Cultural diversity refers to the wide range of cultural differences found between and within nations. Cultural diversity between countries may be the result of natural circumstances (such as climate and geography) or social circumstances (such as level of technology and composition of the population). Some nations—such as Sweden—are referred to as *homogeneous societies*, meaning that they include people who share a common culture and who are typically from similar social, religious, political, and economic backgrounds (though this is changing in Sweden and some other countries as they have become more diverse through relatively high

sanctions

rewards for appropriate behavior or penalties for inappropriate behavior.

folkways

informal norms or everyday customs that may be violated without serious consequences within a particular culture.

mores

strongly held norms with moral and ethical connotations that may not be violated without serious consequences in a particular culture.

taboos

mores so strong that their violation is considered to be extremely offensive and even unmentionable.

laws

formal, standardized norms that have been enacted by legislatures and are enforced by formal sanctions.

technology

the knowledge, techniques, and tools that allow people to transform resources into usable forms and the knowledge and skills required to use them after they are developed.

cultural lag

William Ogburn’s term for a gap between the technical development of a society and its moral and legal institutions.

rates of immigration and other social changes). By contrast, other nations—including the United States—are referred to as *heterogeneous societies*, meaning that they include people who are dissimilar in regard to social characteristics such as religion, income, or race/ethnicity (see ■ Figure 2.11).

Immigration contributes to cultural diversity in a society. Throughout its history, the United States has been a nation of immigrants (see ■ Figure 2.12). Over the past 200 years, more than 60 million “documented” (legal) immigrants have arrived here; innumerable people have also entered the country as undocumented immigrants. Immigration can cause feelings of frustration and hostility, especially in people who feel threatened by the changes that large numbers of immigrants may produce. Often, people are intolerant of those who are different from themselves. When societal tensions rise, people may look for others on whom they can place blame—or single out persons because they are the “other,” the “outsider,” the one who does not “belong.”

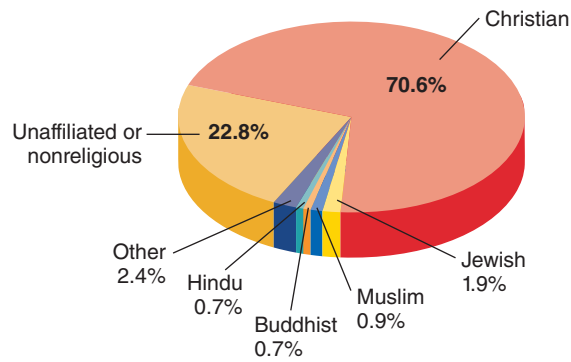
Do you believe that people can overcome these feelings in a culturally diverse society such as the United States? Some analysts believe that it is possible to communicate with others despite differences in race, ethnicity, national origin, age, sexual orientation, religion, social class, occupation, leisure pursuits, regionalism, and so on. People who differ from the dominant group may also find reassurance and social support in a subculture.

Subcultures A *subculture* is a category of people who share distinguishing attributes, beliefs, values, and/or norms that set them apart in some significant manner from the dominant culture. This concept has been applied to distinctions ranging from ethnic, religious, regional, and age-based categories to those categories presumed to be “deviant” or marginalized from the larger society. In the broadest use of the concept, members of thousands of categories of people residing in the United States might be classified as participants in one or more subcultures, including Taylor Swift and Lady Gaga fan clubs, Muslims, and motorcycle enthusiasts. However, many sociological studies of subcultures have limited the scope of inquiry to more visible, distinct subcultures such as the Amish and ethnic enclaves such as Little Persia, Little Ethiopia, Little Brazil, or Greektown to see how participants in subcultures interact with the dominant U.S. culture. Let’s take a brief look at the Old Order Amish, a classic sociological example.

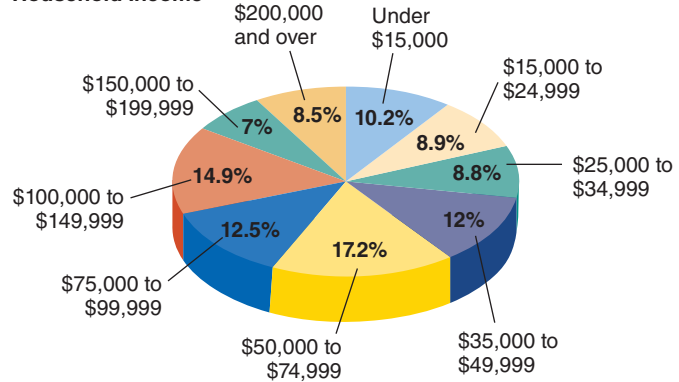
The Old Order Amish Having arrived in the United States in the early 1700s, members of the Old Order Amish have fought to maintain their distinct identity as members of the Old Order Amish Mennonite Church, which adheres to older, more traditional forms of worship, attire, and lifestyle. There are many additional subgroups and different rules within the larger Amish community, but we will look primarily at the Old Order Amish.

Today, most of the Amish live in Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Indiana, but overall, they can be found in as many as 30 states and Canada. Regardless of location, many of them

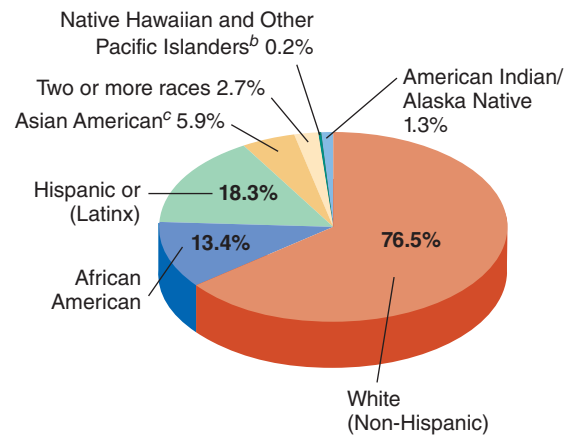
Religious Affiliation



Household Income^a



Race and Ethnic Distribution^{*}



^{*}Note: Not all categories total 100% because of rounding.

^aIn Census Bureau terminology, a household consists of people who occupy a housing unit.

^bIncludes Native Hawaiian, Guamanian or Chamorro, Samoan, and other Pacific Islanders.

^cIncludes Chinese, Filipino, Japanese, Asian, Indian, Korean, Vietnamese, and other Asians.

FIGURE 2.11 Heterogeneity of U.S. Society

Throughout history, the United States has been heterogeneous. Today, we represent a wide diversity of social categories, including our religious affiliations, income levels, and racial–ethnic categories.

Sources: “Income and Poverty in the United States: 2018,” U.S. Census Bureau, 2019; “Quick Facts: United States,” U.S. Census Bureau, 2019; and Pew Research Center Religion and Public Life, 2019.

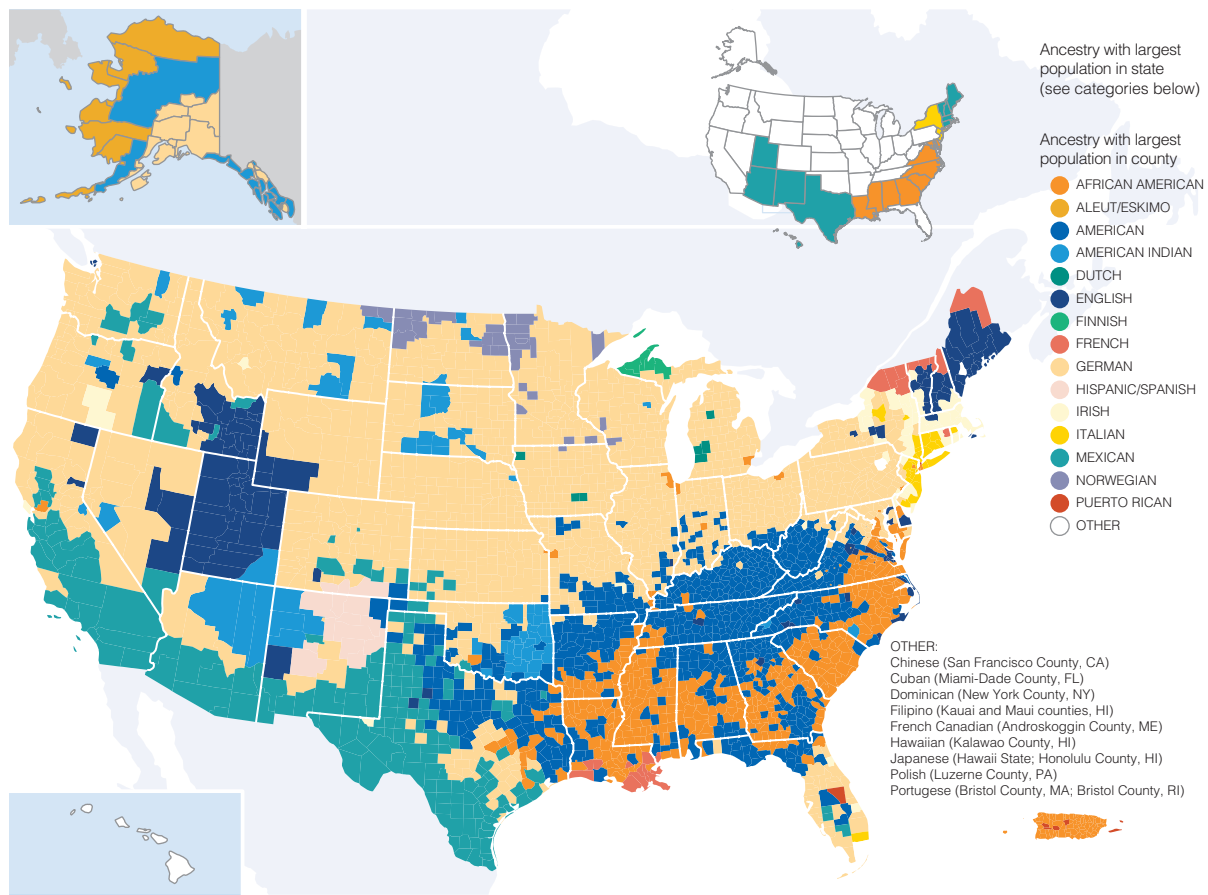


FIGURE 2.12 Cultural Diversity: A Nation of Immigrants

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2012; tabulation by author.

devoutly practice their religious beliefs and remain in a relatively closed social network. According to sociologists, this religious community is a subculture because its members share values and norms that differ from those of people who primarily identify with the dominant U.S. culture. The Amish have a strong faith in God and reject worldly concerns. Their core values include the joy of work, the primacy of the home, faithfulness, thriftiness, tradition, and humility. The Amish hold a conservative view of the family, believing that women are subordinate to men, birth control is unacceptable, and wives should remain at home. Children (about seven per family) are cherished and seen as an economic asset: They help with the farming and other work. Some of the Old Order Amish speak Pennsylvania Dutch (a dialect of German) as well as English. They dress in traditional clothing, live on farms, and rely on the horse and buggy for transportation (■ Figure 2.13).

The Amish are aware that they share distinctive values and look different from other people; these differences provide them with a collective identity and make them feel close to one another. The belief system and group cohesiveness of the Amish remain strong despite the intrusion of corporations and tourists, the vanishing farmlands, and increasing levels of government regulation in their daily lives (Schaefer and Zellner, 2010).



FIGURE 2.13 Although modernization has changed the way of life of some subcultures, groups such as the Old Order Amish have preserved many of their historical practices, including traveling by horse-drawn carriage.

subculture

a category of people who share distinguishing attributes, beliefs, values, and/or norms that set them apart in some significant manner from the dominant culture.

Ethnic Subcultures Some people who have unique shared behaviors linked to a common racial, language, or nationality background identify themselves as members of a specific subculture, whereas others do not. Examples of ethnic subcultures include African Americans, Latinx or Latinos/Latinas (Hispanic Americans), Asian Americans, and Native Americans. Some analysts include “white ethnics” such as Irish Americans, Italian Americans, and Polish Americans. Others also include Anglo Americans (Caucasians).

Although people in ethnic subcultures are dispersed throughout the United States, a concentration of members of some ethnic subcultures is visible in many larger communities and cities. For example, Chinatowns, located in cities such as San Francisco, Los Angeles, and New York, are one of the more visible ethnic subcultures in the United States. By living close to one another and retaining their original customs and language, first-generation immigrants can survive the abrupt changes they experience in material and nonmaterial cultural patterns. In New York City, for example, Korean Americans and Puerto Rican Americans constitute distinctive subcultures, each with its own food, music, and personal style. In San Antonio, Mexican Americans enjoy different food and music than do Puerto Rican Americans or other groups.

Subcultures provide opportunities for the expression of distinctive lifestyles, as well as sometimes helping people adapt to abrupt cultural change. Subcultures can also serve as a buffer against the discrimination experienced by many ethnic or religious groups in the United States. However, some people may be forced by economic or social disadvantage to remain in such ethnic enclaves.

Countercultures A *counterculture* is a group that strongly rejects dominant societal values and norms and seeks alternative lifestyles. Young people are most likely to join countercultural groups, perhaps because younger persons generally have less invested in the existing culture. Examples of countercultures include the beatniks of the 1950s, the flower children of the 1960s, the drug enthusiasts of the 1970s, and contemporary members of nonmainstream religious sects or cults. Occupy Wall Street and its counterparts throughout the United States and other nations began as a counterculture because participants took a stand against dominant cultural values of wealth, power, and political privilege.

Culture Shock

Culture shock is the disorientation that people feel when they encounter cultures radically different from their own and believe they cannot depend on their own taken-for-granted assumptions about life. When people travel to another society, they may not know how to respond to that setting. For example, the late Napoleon Chagnon (2012) described his initial shock at seeing the Yanomamö (pronounced yahnoh-MAH-mah) tribe of South America on his first trip in 1964 (■ Figure 2.14) as being burly, naked, sweaty men who appeared fierce and were apparently drug abusers. The Yanomamö were described as having no written language,



Gavriel Jecan/Danita Delimont/Alamy Stock Photo

FIGURE 2.14 Even as global travel and the media make us more aware of people around the world, the distinctiveness of the Yanomamö in South America remains apparent. Are people today more or less likely than those in the past to experience culture shock upon encountering diverse groups of people such as these Yanomamö?

system of numbers, or calendar. They lead a nomadic lifestyle, carrying everything they owned on their backs. They wore no clothes and painted their bodies. Clearly, like members of thousands of other cultures around the world, the Yanomamö were described as living in a culture very different from that of the United States. Much controversy has ensued over the years among scholars about the work of Napoleon Chagnon, and these debates continue even beyond his death in 2019 (see Horgan, 2019).

Ethnocentrism and Cultural Relativism

When observing people from other cultures, many of us use our own culture as the yardstick by which we judge their behavior. Sociologists refer to this approach as *ethnocentrism*—the practice of judging all other cultures by one’s own culture. Ethnocentrism is based on the assumption that one’s own way of life is superior to all others. For example, most schoolchildren are taught that their own school and country are the best (■ Figure 2.15). The school song, the



Andrea Magugliani/Alamy Stock Photo

FIGURE 2.15 These children from Norway wave their country's flag on May 17 (Norwegian Constitution Day), displaying a form of positive ethnocentrism.

pledge to the flag, and the national anthem are forms of *positive ethnocentrism*. However, *negative ethnocentrism* can also result from constant emphasis on the superiority of one's own group or nation. Negative ethnocentrism is manifested in derogatory stereotypes that ridicule recent immigrants whose customs, dress, eating habits, or religious beliefs are markedly different from those of dominant-group members. Long-term U.S. residents who are members of racial and ethnic minority groups, such as Native Americans, African Americans, Asian Americans, and Latinx have also been the target of ethnocentric practices by other groups.

An alternative to ethnocentrism is *cultural relativism*—the belief that the behaviors and customs of any culture must be viewed and analyzed by the culture's own standards. For example, classical anthropologist Marvin Harris (1974, 1985) used cultural relativism to explain why cattle, which are viewed in India as sacred, are not killed and eaten there, a country in which widespread hunger and malnutrition exist. From an ethnocentric viewpoint, we might conclude that cow worship is the cause of the hunger and poverty in India. However, according to Harris, the Hindu taboo against killing cattle is very important to the

Indian economic system. Live cows are more valuable than dead ones because they have more important uses than as a direct source of food. As part of the ecological system, cows consume grasses of little value to humans. Then they produce two valuable resources—oxen (the neutered offspring of cows) to power the plows and manure (for fuel and fertilizer)—as well as milk for children. As Harris's study reveals, culture may best be viewed and understood from the standpoint of those who live in a particular society.

Cultural relativism also has a downside. It may be used to excuse customs and behavior (such as cannibalism) that may violate basic human rights. Cultural relativism is a part of the sociological imagination; researchers must be aware of the customs and norms of the society they are studying and then spell out their background assumptions so that others can spot possible biases in their studies. However, according to some social scientists, issues surrounding ethnocentrism and cultural relativism may become less distinct in the future as people around the globe increasingly share a common popular culture. Others, of course, disagree with this perspective. Let's see what you think.

A Global Popular Culture?

Before taking this course, what was the first thing you thought about when you heard the term *culture*? In everyday life, culture is often used to describe the fine arts, literature, and classical music. When people say that a person is "cultured," they may mean that the individual has a highly developed sense of style or aesthetic appreciation of the "finer" things.

High Culture and Popular Culture

Some sociologists use the concepts of high culture and popular culture to distinguish between different cultural forms. *High culture* consists of classical music, opera, ballet, live theater, and other activities usually patronized by elite audiences, composed primarily of members of

counterculture

a group that strongly rejects dominant societal values and norms and seeks alternative lifestyles.

culture shock

the disorientation that people feel when they encounter cultures radically different from their own and believe they cannot depend on their own taken-for-granted assumptions about life.

ethnocentrism

the practice of judging all other cultures by one's own culture.

cultural relativism

the belief that the behaviors and customs of any culture must be viewed and analyzed by the culture's own standards.

high culture

classical music, opera, ballet, live theater, and other activities usually patronized by elite audiences.

the upper-middle and upper classes, who have the time, money, and knowledge assumed to be necessary for its appreciation. In the United States, high culture is often viewed as being international in scope, arriving in this country through the process of diffusion, because many art forms originated in European nations or other countries of the world.

By contrast, much of U.S. popular culture is often thought of as “homegrown” in this country. **Popular culture** consists of activities, products, and services that are assumed to appeal primarily to members of the middle and working classes. These include rock concerts, spectator sports, movies, and television soap operas and sitcoms. Although we distinguish between “high” and “popular” culture in our discussion, it is important to note that some social analysts believe the rise of a consumer society in which luxury items have become more widely accessible to large numbers of people has reduced the great divide between them and the activities and possessions associated with wealthy people or a social elite. With the continuing growth of wealth among the top one percent or even less of the U.S. population, the increasing impoverishment of individuals at the bottom of the economic ladder, and the intensifying vocal opposition to vast economic inequalities in this country, we may safely predict that the divide will only grow and not diminish in the 2020s and beyond.

Overall, most sociological examinations of high culture and popular culture focus primarily on the link between culture and social class. French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu's (1984) *cultural capital theory* views high culture as a device used by the dominant class to exclude the subordinate classes. According to Bourdieu, people must be trained to appreciate and understand high culture. Individuals learn about high culture in upper-middle-class and upper-class families and in elite education systems, especially higher education. Once they acquire this trained capacity, they possess a form of cultural capital. Persons from poor and working-class backgrounds typically do not acquire this cultural capital. Because knowledge and appreciation of high culture are considered a prerequisite for access to the dominant class, its members can use their cultural capital to deny access to subordinate-group members and thus preserve and reproduce the existing class structure.



TIMOTHY A. CLARY/AFP/Getty Images

FIGURE 2.16 Television, the Internet, and social media have provided celebrities like Beyoncé with a global platform from which they can connect to their worldwide audience. What other personality fads can you identify?

Forms of Popular Culture

Three prevalent forms of popular culture are fads, fashions, and leisure activities. A *fad* is a temporary but widely copied activity followed enthusiastically by large numbers of people. Most fads are short-lived novelties. Fads can be divided into four major categories. First, *object fads* are items that people purchase despite the fact that they have little use value, such as fidget spinners (a toy that consists of a ball bearing in the center of a multilobed flat structure that spins along its axis with little effort) or wristbands that make a statement or support a cause. Second, *activity fads* include pursuits such as body piercing or following food trucks from place to place to eat after owners have announced their current location on Instagram, Facebook, or other social media. Third are *idea fads*, such as following social media influencers who encourage us to purchase brands that they like or to engage in other trends that they recommend. Some are celebrity influencers who greatly affect the ideas of their followers; others are less well-known individuals who are liked for their personalities, pets, appearance, or other social assets. Fourth are *personality fads*—for example, those surrounding celebrities such as members of the Kardashian family, Taylor Swift, Katy Perry, and Beyoncé (■ Figure 2.16).

A *fashion* is a currently valued style of behavior, thinking, or appearance that is longer lasting and more widespread than a fad. Examples of fashion are found in many areas, including childrearing, education, arts, clothing, music, and sports. Soccer is an example of a fashion in sports. Until fairly recently in the United States, soccer was most commonly played by schoolchildren. Now it has

become a popular sport, perhaps in part because of immigration from Latin America and other areas of the world where soccer is widely played.

Like soccer, other forms of popular culture move across nations. In fact, popular culture is one of the United States' largest exports. In turn, people in this country continue to be strongly influenced by popular culture from other nations. Will the spread of popular culture produce a homogeneous global culture? Critics argue that the world is not developing a global culture; rather, other cultures are becoming Westernized. Political and religious leaders in some nations oppose this process, which they view as **cultural imperialism**—the extensive infusion of one nation's culture into other nations. For example, some view the widespread infusion of the English language into countries that speak other languages as a form of cultural imperialism. On the other hand, the concept of cultural imperialism may fail to take into account various cross-cultural influences. For example, cultural diffusion of literature, music, clothing, and food has occurred on a global scale. A global culture, if it comes into existence, will most likely include components from many societies and cultures.

Sociological Analysis of Culture

Sociologists regard culture as a central ingredient in human behavior. Although all sociologists share a similar purpose, they typically see culture through somewhat different lenses as different theoretical perspectives in their research guide them. What do these perspectives tell us about culture?

Functionalist Perspectives

Functionalist perspectives are based on the assumption that society is a stable, orderly system with interrelated parts that serve specific functions. Anthropologist Bronislaw Malinowski (1922) suggested that culture helps people meet their *biological needs* (including food and procreation), *instrumental needs* (including law and education), and *integrative needs* (including religion and art). Societies in which people share a common language and core values are more likely to have consensus and harmony.

How might functionalist analysts view popular culture? According to many functionalist theorists, popular culture serves a significant function in society in that it may be the “glue” that holds society together. Regardless of race, class, sex, age, or other characteristics, many people are brought together (at least in spirit) to cheer teams competing in major sporting events such as the Super Bowl and the Olympics. Television, the Internet, and social media help integrate recent immigrants into the mainstream culture, whereas longer-term residents may become more homogenized as a result of seeing the same images and being exposed to the same beliefs and values. However, functionalists acknowledge that all societies have dysfunctions, which produce a variety of societal problems. When a society contains numerous subcultures, discord may result from a lack of

consensus about values and social norms. In fact, popular culture may undermine cultural values rather than reinforce them. For example, popular culture may glorify crime, rather than focus on the value of hard work, as the easiest, quickest way to get ahead. According to some analysts, excessive violence in music, video games, movies, and television shows may be harmful to children and young people. From this perspective, popular culture can be a factor in antisocial behavior such as hate crimes and mass shootings.

A positive aspect of the functionalist perspective on culture is its focus on the needs of society and the fact that stability is essential for society's continued survival. A shortcoming of this approach is its overemphasis on order and cooperation. This approach also fails to fully account for factors embedded in the structure of society—such as inequalities based on class, race, sex/gender, sexual orientation, age, ability/disability, or many other characteristics that contribute to conflict among people in the United States and worldwide.

Conflict Perspectives

Conflict perspectives are based on the assumption that social life is a continuous struggle in which members of powerful groups seek to control scarce resources. According to this approach, values and norms help create and sustain the privileged position of the powerful in society while excluding others. As early conflict theorist Karl Marx stressed, ideas are *cultural creations* of a society's most powerful members. Thus, it is possible for political, economic, and social leaders to use *ideology*—an integrated system of ideas that is external to, and coercive of, people—to maintain their positions of dominance in a society. As Marx stated,

The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas, i.e., the class which is the ruling material force in society, is at the same time, its ruling intellectual force. The class, which has the means of material production at its disposal, has control at the same time over the means of mental production. . . . The ruling ideas are nothing more than the ideal expression of the dominant material relationships, the dominant material relationships grasped as ideas.
(Marx and Engels, 1970/1845–1846: 64)

Many contemporary conflict theorists agree with Marx's assertion that ideas, a nonmaterial component of culture, are used by agents of the ruling class to affect the thoughts and actions of members of other classes. The role of the

popular culture

activities, products, and services that are assumed to appeal primarily to members of the middle and working classes.

cultural imperialism

the extensive infusion of one nation's culture into other nations.

mass media in influencing people's thinking about the foods that they should—or should not—eat is an example of such ideological control.

How might conflict theorists view popular culture? Some conflict theorists believe that popular culture, which originated with everyday people, has been largely removed from their domain and has become nothing more than a part of the capitalist economy in the United States. From this approach, only a few media conglomerates control 90 percent of all U.S. media and have an oversized influence on what individuals think and see and how they behave. Netflix, Comcast (linked to NBCUniversal and Hulu), Disney, Viacom and CBS (both under ownership and/or control of National Amusements), and AT&T (linked to WarnerMedia) control most of our television channels, streaming services, film studios, video games, and social media. As a result, they have an outsized influence on our perceptions about reality.

Creating new popular culture also promotes consumption of *commodities*—experiences (travel, entertaining, dining, etc.) and physical objects outside ourselves that we purchase to satisfy our human needs or wants. According to contemporary social analysts, consumption—even of things that we do not need—has become prevalent at all social levels, and many middle- and lower-income individuals and families now use as their frame of reference the lifestyles of the more affluent in determining what they want or need. As a result, many families live on credit in order to purchase the goods and services that they would like to have or that keep them on the competitive edge with their friends, neighbors, and coworkers.

A strength of the conflict perspective is that it stresses how cultural values and norms may perpetuate social inequalities. It also highlights the inevitability of change and the constant tension between those who want to maintain the status quo and those who desire change (■ Figure 2.17). A limitation is its focus on societal discord and the divisiveness of culture.

Symbolic Interactionist Perspectives

Unlike functionalists and conflict theorists, who focus primarily on macrolevel concerns, symbolic interactionists engage in a microlevel analysis that views society as the sum of all people's interactions. From this perspective, people create, maintain, and modify culture as they go about their everyday activities. Symbols make communication with others possible because symbols provide us with shared meanings.

According to some symbolic interactionists, people continually negotiate their social realities. Values and norms are not independent realities that automatically determine our behavior. Instead, we reinterpret them in each social situation we encounter. However, classical sociologist Georg Simmel warned that the larger cultural world—including both material culture and nonmaterial culture—eventually takes on a life of its own apart from the actors who daily



AP Images/Am Johansson

FIGURE 2.17 Rapid changes in language and culture in the United States are reflected in this sign at a shopping center. How do functionalist and conflict theorists' views regarding language differ?

re-create social life. As a result, individuals may be more controlled by culture than they realize.

Simmel (1900/1907) suggested that money is an example of how people may be controlled by their culture. According to Simmel, people initially create money as a means of exchange, but then money acquires a social meaning that extends beyond its purely economic function. Money becomes an end in itself and a measure of people's "worth" rather than as a means to an end. Today, we are aware of the relative "worth" not only of objects but also of individuals. Many people revere wealthy entrepreneurs and highly paid celebrities, entertainers, and sports figures for the amount of money they make, not for their intrinsic qualities. According to Simmel, money makes it possible for us to *relativize* everything, including our relationships with other people. When social life can be reduced to money, people become cynical, believing that anything—including people, objects, beauty, and truth—can be bought if we can pay the price. Although Simmel acknowledged the positive functions of money, he believed that the social interpretations people give to money often produce individual feelings of cynicism and isolation.

A symbolic interactionist approach highlights how people maintain and change culture through their interactions with others. However, interactionism does not provide

a systematic framework for analyzing how we shape culture and how it, in turn, shapes us. It also does not provide insight into how shared meanings are developed among people, and it does not take into account the many situations in which there is disagreement on meanings. Whereas the functional and conflict approaches tend to overemphasize the macro-level workings of society, the interactionist viewpoint often fails to take these larger social structures into account.

Postmodernist Perspectives

Postmodernist theorists believe that much of what has been written about culture in the Western world is Eurocentric—that it is based on the uncritical assumption that European culture (including its dispersed versions in countries such as the United States, Australia, and South Africa) is the true, universal culture in which all the world's people ought to believe (Lemert, 1997). By contrast, postmodernists believe that we should speak of *cultures* rather than *culture*.

However, Jean Baudrillard, one of the best-known French social theorists and key figures in postmodern theory, believes that the world of culture today is based on *simulation*, not reality. According to Baudrillard, social life is much more a spectacle that simulates reality than it is reality itself. Many U.S. children, upon entering school for the first time, have already watched more hours of television than the total number of hours of classroom instruction they will encounter in their entire school careers. Add to this the number of hours that some children will have spent playing computer games or on social media sites, where they often find that it is more interesting to deal with imaginary heroes and villains or individuals they have “friended” than to interact with “real people” in real life. Baudrillard refers to this social creation as *hyperreality*—a situation in which the *simulation* of reality is more real than experiencing the event itself and having any actual connection with what is taking place. For Baudrillard, everyday life has been captured by the signs and symbols generated to represent it, and we ultimately relate to simulations and models as if they were reality.

Baudrillard (1983) uses Disneyland as an example of a simulation—one that conceals the reality that exists outside rather than inside the boundaries of the artificial perimeter (■ Figure 2.18). According to Baudrillard, Disney theme parks constitute a form of seduction that substitutes symbolic (seductive) power for real power, particularly the ability to bring about social change. From this perspective, amusement park “guests” may feel like “survivors” after enduring the rapid speed and gravity-defying movements of the roller-coaster rides or see themselves as “winners” after surviving fights with hideous cartoon villains on the “dark rides.” In reality, they have been made to *appear* to have power, but they do not actually possess any real power.

In their examination of culture, postmodernist social theorists thus make us aware of the fact that no single perspective can grasp the complexity and diversity of the social world. There is no one, single, universal culture. They also make us aware that reality may not be what it seems.



FIGURE 2.18 Tokyo Disney Resort in Japan illustrates the idea of postmodern social theorist Jean Baudrillard that theme parks provide visitors with a *simulation* of reality—visitors’ symbolic power as “guests” and “consumers” is a substitute for having real power to bring about change in the real world.

CONCEPT Quick Review		
Analysis of Culture		
Components of Culture	Symbol	Anything that meaningfully represents something else.
	Language	A set of symbols that expresses ideas and enables people to think and communicate with one another.
	Values	Collective ideas about what is right or wrong, good or bad, and desirable or undesirable in a particular culture.
	Norms	Established rules of behavior or standards of conduct.
Sociological Analysis of Culture	Functionalist perspectives	Culture helps people meet their biological, instrumental, and expressive needs.
	Conflict perspectives	Ideas are a cultural creation of society's most powerful members and can be used by the ruling class to affect the thoughts and actions of members of other classes.
	Symbolic interactionist perspectives	People create, maintain, and modify culture during their everyday activities; however, cultural creations can take on a life of their own and end up controlling people.
	Postmodern perspectives	Much of culture today is based on simulation of reality (e.g., what we see on television) rather than reality itself.

According to the postmodernist view, no one authority can claim to know social reality, and we should deconstruct—take apart and subject to intense critical scrutiny—existing beliefs and theories about culture in hopes of gaining new insights.

Although postmodern theories of culture have been criticized on a number of grounds, we will mention only three. One criticism is postmodernism's lack of a clear conceptualization of ideas. Another is its tendency to critique other perspectives as being “grand narratives,” whereas postmodernists offer their own varieties of such narratives. Finally, some analysts believe that postmodern analyses of culture lead to profound pessimism about the future.

This chapter's Concept Quick Review summarizes the components of culture as well as how the four major perspectives view it.

Looking Ahead: Culture, Social Change, and Your Future

Many changes are occurring in the United States. Increasing cultural diversity can either cause long-simmering racial and ethnic antagonisms to come closer to a boiling point or result in the creation of a truly “rainbow culture” in which diversity is respected and encouraged.

In the future the issue of cultural diversity will increase in importance, especially in schools (see “You Can Make a Difference”). Multicultural education that focuses on the contributions of a wide variety of people from different backgrounds will continue to be an issue of controversy from kindergarten through college (■Figure 2.19). Schools

continue to face the challenge of embracing widespread cultural diversity while conveying a sense of community and national identity to students.

Technology will continue to have a profound effect on culture. Television and radio, film and video, and digital communications will continue to accelerate the flow of information and expand cultural diffusion throughout the world. Global communication devices will move images of people's lives, behavior, and fashions instantaneously among almost all nations. Increasingly, computers and cyberspace will become people's window on the world and, in the process, promote greater integration or fragmentation among nations. Integration occurs when there is a widespread acceptance of ideas and items—such as democracy, hip-hop or pop music, blue jeans, and hamburgers—among cultures. By contrast, fragmentation occurs when people in one culture disdain the beliefs and actions of other cultures. As a force for both cultural integration and fragmentation, technology will continue to revolutionize communications, but most of the world's population will not participate in this revolution.

From a sociological perspective, the study of culture helps us not only understand our own “tool kit” of symbols, stories, rituals, and worldviews but also expands our insights to include those of other people of the world, who also seek strategies for enhancing their own lives. If we understand how culture is used by people, how cultural elements constrain or further certain patterns of action, what aspects of our cultural heritage have enduring effects on our actions, and what specific historical changes undermine the validity of some cultural patterns and give rise to others, we can apply our sociological imagination not only to our own society but to the entire world as well.



FIGURE 2.19 Although students often use similar digital equipment, their diverse backgrounds represent a challenge for teachers who wish to focus on everyone's cultural heritage but also provide a sense of community.

YOU CAN **Make A Difference**

Schools as Laboratories for Getting Along: Having Lunch Together

Where did you make many of your childhood friends? Where did you learn about their families and cultural backgrounds? Research has shown that schools and friendship groups can expose children and young people to cultures that are different from their own. Studies have also shown that it may be easier for children to set aside their differences and get to know one another than it is for adults to do so, particularly if children are able to spend time together at lunch or talking in other informal settings. Consider what happened among some children at the International Community School in Decatur, Georgia. Some students were born in the United States, but many were refugees from as many as 40 war-torn countries. This school became a “laboratory for getting along,” particularly when some children took the initiative to befriend and help others by doing such things as eating lunch with them (International Community School, 2016). An excellent example is the friendship that developed between nine-year-old Dante Ramirez and Soung Oo Hlaing, an eleven-year-old Burmese refugee who spoke no English:

The two boys met on the first day of school this year. Despite the language barrier, Dante managed to invite the newcomer to sit with him at lunch.

“I didn’t think he’d make friends at the beginning because he didn’t speak that much English,” Dante said. “So, I thought I should be his friend.”

In the next weeks, the boys had a sleepover. They trick-or-treated on Soung’s first Halloween.

Soung, a gifted artist, gave Dante pointers on how to draw. And Dante helped Soung with his English. “I use simple words that are easy to know and sometimes hand movements,” Dante explained. “For ‘huge,’ I would make my hands bigger. And for ‘big,’ I would make my hands smaller than for huge.” (St. John, 2007: A14)

Over time, as the boys got to know each other better, their mothers also developed a friendship and began to celebrate ethnic holidays together even though they largely relied on gestures (a form of nonverbal communication) to communicate with each other. Could “laboratories” such as this help more people from diverse cultures get along? Would you like to participate in a school or community effort, such as arranging lunches or other meals together, to help people get to know individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds?

Reflect & Analyze

What examples can you provide that show how eating together or having other social gatherings may create new bonds across diverse cultural groups on your college campus or in the community where you reside?

Q&A **Chapter Review**

Use these questions and answers to check how well you’ve achieved the learning objectives set out at the beginning of this chapter.

LO1 What is culture, and why is it important in helping people in their daily lives?

Culture is the knowledge, language, values, customs, and material objects that are passed from person to person and from one generation to the next in a human group or society. Culture is essential for our individual survival and our communication with other people.

LO2 What is material culture, and what are the four nonmaterial components of culture that are common to all societies?

Material culture consists of physical and tangible creations that members of society make, use, and share. Changes in technology continue to shape the material culture of society. Nonmaterial components of culture are symbols, language, values, and norms.

LO3 What are cultural universals?

Cultural universals are customs and practices that exist in all societies and include activities and institutions such as storytelling, families, and laws. However, specific forms of these universals vary from one cultural group to another.

LO4 How do symbols and language reflect cultural values?

Symbols express shared meanings; through them, groups communicate cultural ideas and abstract concepts. Language is a set of symbols through which groups communicate. One of our most important human attributes is the ability to use language to share our experiences, feelings, and knowledge with others.

LO5 What are the differences among folkways, mores, and laws?

Folkways are norms that express the everyday customs of a group, whereas mores are norms with strong moral and ethical connotations and are essential to the stability of a culture. Laws are formal, standardized norms that are enforced by formal sanctions.

LO6 How have technological changes affected the culture of a nation and the world?

All parts of culture do not change at the same pace. However, technological change widens a cultural lag between a technical development in a society and the society's moral and legal institutions. The pace of technology modifies people's daily lives, as evident in the spread of information

via smart technologies, such as handheld electronic devices and automated jobs.

LO7 Explain the importance of culture shock, ethnocentrism, and cultural relativism.

These terms are important for studying culture and for gaining a better understanding of how we relate to other people, whether we may realize it or not. Culture shock refers to the anxiety that people experience when they encounter cultures radically different from their own. Ethnocentrism is the assumption that one's own culture is superior to other cultures. Cultural relativism views and analyzes another culture in terms of that culture's own values and standards. Depending on which of these approaches we use in our views of others and communications with others, we may have quite different outcomes in our social interactions.

LO8 How do the major sociological perspectives view society and culture?

A functionalist analysis of culture assumes that a common language and shared values help produce consensus and harmony. According to some conflict theorists, certain groups may use culture to maintain their privilege and exclude others from society's benefits. Symbolic interactionists suggest that people create, maintain, and modify culture as they go about their everyday activities. Postmodern thinkers believe that there are many cultures within the United States alone. In order to grasp a better understanding of how popular culture may simulate reality rather than be reality, postmodernists believe that we need a new way of conceptualizing culture and society.

Key Terms

beliefs 40

counterculture 54

cultural imperialism 57

cultural lag 50

cultural relativism 55

cultural universals 40

culture 39

culture shock 54

ethnocentrism 54

folkways 50

high culture 55

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mores 50

nonmaterial culture 40

norms 48

popular culture 56

sanctions 50

Sapir-Whorf hypothesis 44

subculture 52

symbol 42

taboos 50

technology 50

value contradictions 48

values 46

Questions for **Critical Thinking**

- 1 Would it be possible today to live in a totally separate culture in the United States? Could you avoid all influences from the mainstream popular culture or from the values and norms of other cultures? How would you be able to avoid any change in your culture?
- 2 Consider a wide variety of fads and fashions: musical styles, computer and video games and other technologies, literature, and political, social, and religious ideas. Do fads and fashions reflect and reinforce or challenge and change the values and norms of a society?
- 3 You are doing a survey analysis of recent immigrants to the United States to determine the effects of U.S. popular culture on their views and behavior. What are some of the questions that you would use in your survey?

Answers to **Sociology Quiz**

Global Food and Culture

1	False	Although cheese is a popular food in many cultures, most of the people living in China find cheese distasteful and prefer delicacies such as duck's feet.
2	True	In some cultures, round foods such as pears, grapes, and moon cakes are given to celebrate the birth of babies because the shape of the food is believed to symbolize family unity.
3	False	Although wedding cakes are a tradition in virtually all nations and cultures, the ingredients of the cake—as well as other foods served at the celebration—vary widely. For example, the traditional wedding cake in Italy is made from biscuits.
4	True	Many faiths, including Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism, have dietary rules and rituals that involve food; however, these practices and beliefs vary widely among individuals and communities.
5	True	Just as foods are divided into yin foods (e.g., bean sprouts and carrots) and yang foods (beef, chicken, and mushrooms), cooking methods are also referred to as having yin qualities (e.g., boiling and steaming) or yang qualities (roasting and stir-frying). For many Chinese Americans, yin and yang are complementary pairs that should be incorporated into all aspects of social life, including the ingredients and preparation of foods.
6	False	Although more people now rely on fast foods, some cultural and religious communities—such as the Amish of Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Indiana—encourage families to prepare their food from scratch and to preserve their own fruits, vegetables, and meats. Rural families are more likely to grow their own food or prepare it from scratch than are urban families.
7	False	Rice is a popular mainstay in the diets of people from diverse cultural backgrounds—from the Hmong and Vietnamese to Puerto Ricans and Mexican Americans—who have arrived in the United States over the past four decades. Among some in the younger generations, however, food choices have become increasingly Americanized, and items such as french fries and pizza have become popular.
8	True	Cultural diversity is a major issue in eating, and people in some cultures, religions, and nations expect that even an “outsider” will have a basic familiarity with, and respect for, their traditions and practices. However, social analysts also suggest that we should not generalize or imply that certain characteristics apply to <i>all</i> people in a cultural group or nation.





Socialization

3

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- 1 Describe** the significance of socialization in human development.
- 2 Discuss** the key aspects of the social-psychological theories of human development.
- 3 Discuss** the sociological perspective on human development, emphasizing the contributions of Charles Horton Cooley and George Herbert Mead.
- 4 Contrast** functionalist and conflict theorists' perspectives on the roles that families and schools play in the socialization process.
- 5 Explain** the role that peer groups and media play in socialization now and the role that these agents will play in the future.
- 6 Identify** ways in which gender socialization and racial-ethnic socialization occur.
- 7 Discuss** the importance of the socialization process in each stage of the life course.
- 8 Distinguish** between voluntary and involuntary resocialization.

SOCIOLOGY & **Everyday Life**

Class Attendance in Higher Education

Part of my job . . . is to give presentations to visiting middle and high school classes that come to see what a college campus is like. I nearly always start off my presentation by asking the students how they think college is different from high school. One day, a very bright high school student responded by saying, “You don’t have to go to class if you don’t want to.” . . . I’ve worked on college campuses for the past nine years and one of the most commonly overheard conversations in the dining halls goes something like this:

Student A: Hey, did you go to class today?

Student B: Yeah, I was there, where were you?

Student A: I didn’t feel like going. Did we do anything in class?

Student B: No, not really.

Student A: Oh cool, then I didn’t miss anything.

Really? You think the professor just stared at the class blankly for the class period and didn’t say a word?

—Seth Miller (2011), admissions advisor at a U.S. university, tells this story to get us thinking about the importance of class attendance



Fuse/Getty Images

Harvard University conducted an experiment to record students’ attendance by setting up secret cameras in ten lecture halls. The cameras took a photo every one minute to show how many seats are empty or filled. Overall, about 2,000 undergraduate students were filmed to study classroom attendance. Professors whose classes were filmed were informed, but other faculty and students were unaware this was happening. A group of students and faculty claimed that this action constitutes an invasion of privacy, and extensive debate about the issue took place on campus and across the nation (*Harvard*

You may wonder what class attendance in college has to do with socialization. Why are colleges and universities concerned about students attending classes? Simply stated, skipping classes may be one major factor associated with students’ poor grades or lack of overall academic success. In fact, some analysts believe that class attendance is the best-known predictor of college grades, particularly in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) courses. Clearly, grades are also related to graduation rates. How do you learn in your classes? As you know, information is often communicated to students through formal instruction, such as in a professor’s syllabus or class lecture. But we also learn informally as a result of our personal observations and interactions with others when we are in their physical presence or our use of digital communications.

How were you socialized to attend classes and to meet the requirements of your courses? As previously mentioned, some methods of socialization are more direct, such as what the professor states in the syllabus about attendance requirements. Some approaches are more covert. Are you aware of the “retention alert system” that many colleges are now using to promote attendance? This system involves the use of technology to record students’ attendance, such as digital chips in students’ ID cards, interactive software, or clickers. In a somewhat

controversial move, some universities are now using video equipment to record images of everyone present in a lecture hall. As students, parents, professors, and administrators have become increasingly concerned about low graduation rates, particularly after four years, more emphasis has been placed on how to socialize students for success and ways to eliminate problems such as excessive absences. Concerns about the high cost of a college education, combined with rapidly increasing student debt, have made schools more aware that something must be done to ensure student success. Newer technologies will no doubt play an important part in twenty-first-century socialization, not only in higher education but in all areas of our social life. As you expand your knowledge of sociology, you will often find yourself using the term **socialization** to refer to the process by which people learn various social roles throughout their life and find out how to successfully participate in many groups and organizations.

In this chapter we examine the process of socialization and identify reasons why socialization is crucial to the well-being of individuals, groups, and societies. We discuss both sociological and social-psychological theories of human development. We look at the dynamics of socialization—how it occurs and what shapes it. We also focus on positive and negative aspects of the socialization process, including the daily stresses that may be involved in this process.

Magazine, 2014). After learning that 60 percent of the students attended their lecture, on average; 87 percent attend when it was part of their grade; 49 percent attended when it was not part of their grade; there was a 36 percent loss in attendance by semester's end; and

there was a 10 percent loss in attendance Wednesday to Friday of each week, the Harvard Initiative for Learning and Teaching, the group that was conducting the research, decided to discontinue their study (*New York Times*, 2015).

How Much Do You Know About Socialization and the College Experience?

TRUE	FALSE	
T	F	1 Professors are the primary agents of socialization for college students.
T	F	2 Researchers have found that few students spend time studying with other students.
T	F	3 Many students find that college courses are stressful because the classes are an abrupt change from those found in high school.
T	F	4 Law and medical students often report high levels of academic pressure because they know that their classmates were top students during their undergraduate years.
T	F	5 Academic stress may be positive for students: It does not necessarily trigger psychological stress.
T	F	6 College students typically find the socialization process in higher education to be less stressful than the professional socialization process they experience when they enter an occupation or profession.
T	F	7 Students who hold jobs outside of school experience higher levels of stress than students who are not employed during their college years.
T	F	8 Getting good grades and completing schoolwork are the top sources of stress reported by college students.

Answers can be found at the end of the chapter.

Before reading on, test your knowledge about socialization and the college experience by taking the "Sociology and Everyday Life" quiz. ●

Why Is Socialization Important Around the Globe?

What do you think of when you hear the word *socialization*? Many of us first think of parties or other gatherings where we are with our friends, but the term will come to have a special meaning for you as a sociology student. **Socialization** is the lifelong process of social interaction through which individuals acquire a self-identity and the physical, mental, and social skills needed for survival in society (■ Figure 3.1). It is the essential link between the individual and society because it helps us become aware of ourselves as members of the larger groups and organizations of which we are a part. Socialization also helps us to learn how to communicate with other people and to have knowledge of how other people expect us to behave in a variety of social settings. Briefly stated,

socialization enables us to develop our human potential and to learn the ways of thinking, talking, and acting that are necessary for social living.

When do you think socialization is most important? Socialization is the most crucial during childhood because it is essential for the individual's survival and for human development. The many people who met the early material and social needs of each of us were central to our establishing our own identity. Can you identify some of the people in your own life who were the most influential in your earliest years of social development? During the first three years of our life, we begin to develop both a unique identity and the ability to manipulate things and to walk. We acquire sophisticated cognitive tools for thinking and for analyzing a wide variety of situations, and we learn effective communication skills. In the process we begin

socialization

the lifelong process of social interaction through which individuals acquire a self-identity and the physical, mental, and social skills needed for survival in society.



Human Development: Biology and Society

What do you think it means to be “human”? To be human includes being conscious of ourselves as individuals, with unique identities, personalities, and relationships with others. As humans, we have ideas, emotions, and values. We have the capacity to think and to make rational decisions. But what is the source of “humanness”? Are we born with these human characteristics, or do we develop them through our interactions with others?

Have you ever thought about what you were like when you were first born? When we are born, we are totally dependent on others for our survival. We cannot turn ourselves over, speak, reason, plan, or do many of the things that are associated with being human. Although we can nurse, wet, and cry, most small mammals can also do those things. As discussed in Chapter 2,

we humans differ from nonhuman animals because we lack instincts and must rely on learning for our survival. Human infants have the potential to develop human characteristics if they are exposed to an adequate socialization process.

Do you think we are more the product of our biological inheritance or of the people we are around? Every human being is a product of biology, society, and personal experiences—that is, of heredity and environment or, in even more basic terms, “nature” and “nurture.” How much of our development can be explained by socialization? How much by our genetic heritage? Sociologists focus on how humans design their own culture and transmit it from generation to generation through socialization. By contrast, sociobiologists assert that nature, in the form of our genetic makeup, is a major factor in shaping human behavior. **Sociobiology** is the systematic study of “social behavior from a biological perspective” (Wilson and Wilson, 2007: 328). According to zoologist Edward O. Wilson, who pioneered sociobiology, genetic inheritance underlies many forms of social behavior, such as war and peace, envy of and concern for others, and competition and cooperation. Most sociologists disagree with the notion that biological principles exclusively can be used to explain human behavior. Obviously, however, some aspects of our physical makeup—such as eye color, hair color, height, and weight—are largely determined by our heredity. The extent to which our genetic makeup (DNA) is a factor in our behavior patterns will continue to be a topic of research among geneticists and other scientists for the foreseeable future.

How important do you think the social influence (“nurture”) is on human development? There is hardly a single behavior that is not influenced socially. Except for simple reflexes, most human actions are social, either in their causes

FIGURE 3.1 The kind of person we become depends greatly on the people who surround us. How will this boy’s life be shaped by his close and warm relationship with his mother?

a socialization process that takes place throughout our lives and through which we also have an effect on other people around us.

What does socialization do for us beyond the individual level? Socialization is essential for the survival and stability of society. Members of a society must be socialized to support and maintain the existing social structure. From a functionalist perspective, individual conformity to existing norms is not taken for granted; rather, basic individual needs and desires must be balanced against the needs of the social structure. The socialization process is most effective when people conform to the norms of society because they believe that doing so is the best course of action. Socialization enables a society to “reproduce” itself by passing on its culture from one generation to the next.

How does socialization differ across cultures and ways of life? Although the techniques used to teach newcomers the beliefs, values, and rules of behavior are somewhat similar in many nations, the *content* of socialization differs greatly from society to society. How people walk, talk, eat, make love, and wage war are all functions of the culture in which they are raised. At the same time, we are also influenced by our exposure to subcultures of class, race, ethnicity, religion, and gender. In addition, each of us has unique experiences in our family and friendship groupings. The kind of human being that we become depends greatly on the particular society and social groups that surround us at birth and during early childhood. What we believe about ourselves, our society, and the world does not spring full bloom from inside ourselves; rather, we learn these things from our interactions with others. What examples can you think of from your own experiences with your family and other close associates?

or in their consequences. Even solitary actions such as crying or brushing our teeth are ultimately social. We cry because someone has hurt us. We brush our teeth because our parents (or dentist) told us it was important. Social environment probably has a greater effect than heredity on the way we develop and the way we act. However, heredity does provide the basic material from which other people help to mold an individual's human characteristics.

How are our biological and emotional needs met, and how are they related? Children whose needs are met in settings characterized by affection, warmth, and closeness see the world as a safe and comfortable place and see other people as trustworthy and helpful. By contrast, infants and children who receive less-than-adequate care or who are emotionally rejected or abused often view the world as hostile and have feelings of suspicion and fear.



FIGURE 3.2 As Harry and Margaret Harlow discovered, humans are not the only primates that need contact with others. Deprived of its mother, this infant monkey found a substitute.

Martin Rogers/The Image Bank/Getty Images

The Harlows' experiments show the detrimental effects of isolation on nonhuman primates. When the young monkeys were later introduced to other members of their species, they cringed in the corner. Having been deprived of social contact during their first six months of life, they never learned how to relate to other monkeys or to become well-adjusted adults—they were fearful of or hostile toward other monkeys (Harlow and Harlow, 1962, 1977).

Because humans rely more heavily on social learning than do monkeys, the process of socialization is even more important for us.

Isolated Children Of course, sociologists would never place children in isolated circumstances so that they could observe what happened to them. However, some cases have arisen in which parents or other caregivers failed to fulfill their responsibilities, leaving children alone or placing them in isolated circumstances. From analysis of these situations, social scientists

have documented cases in which children were deliberately raised in isolation. A look at the lives of two children who suffered such emotional abuse provides important insights into the significance of a positive socialization process and the negative effects of social isolation.

Anna Born in 1932 in Pennsylvania to an unmarried, mentally impaired woman, Anna was an unwanted child. She was kept in an attic-like room in her grandfather's house. Her mother, who worked on the farm all day and often went out at night, gave Anna just enough care to keep her alive; she received no other care. Sociologist Kingsley Davis (1940) described Anna's condition when she was found in 1938:

[Anna] had no glimmering of speech, absolutely no ability to walk, no sense of gesture, not the least capacity to feed herself even when the food was put in front of her, and no comprehension of cleanliness. She was so apathetic that it was hard to tell whether or not she could hear. And all of this at the age of nearly six years.

Problems Associated with Social Isolation and Maltreatment

Social environment, then, is a crucial part of an individual's socialization. Even nonhuman primates such as monkeys and chimpanzees need social contact with others of their species in order to develop properly. As we will see, appropriate social contact is even more important for humans.

Isolation and Nonhuman Primates Researchers have attempted to demonstrate the effects of social isolation on nonhuman primates raised without contact with others of their own species. In a series of laboratory experiments, psychologists Harry and Margaret Harlow (1962, 1977) took infant rhesus monkeys from their mothers and isolated them in separate cages. Each cage contained two nonliving "mother substitutes" made of wire, one with a feeding bottle attached and the other covered with soft terry cloth but without a bottle (see ■ Figure 3.2). The infant monkeys instinctively clung to the cloth "mother" and would not abandon it until hunger drove them to the bottle attached to the wire "mother." As soon as they were full, they went back to the cloth "mother" seeking warmth, affection, and physical comfort.

sociobiology

the systematic study of "social behavior from a biological perspective."

When she was placed in a special school and given the necessary care, Anna slowly learned to walk, talk, and care for herself. Just before her death at the age of ten, Anna reportedly could follow directions, talk in phrases, wash her hands, brush her teeth, and try to help other children (Davis, 1940).

Genie About three decades later, Genie was found in 1970 at the age of thirteen (■ Figure 3.3). She had been locked in a bedroom alone, alternately strapped down to a child's potty chair or straitjacketed into a sleeping bag, since she was twenty months old. She had been fed baby food and beaten with a wooden paddle when she whimpered. She had not heard the sounds of human speech because no one talked to her and there was no television or radio in her room (Curtiss, 1977; Pines, 1981). Genie was placed in a pediatric hospital, where one of the psychologists described her condition:

At the time of her admission she was virtually unsocialized. She could not stand erect, salivated continuously, had never been toilet-trained and had no control over her urinary or bowel functions. She was unable to chew solid food and had the weight, height and appearance of a child half her age. (Rigler, 1993: 35)



Bettmann/Corbis

FIGURE 3.3 A victim of extreme child abuse, Genie was isolated from human contact and tortured until she was rescued at the age of thirteen. What are the consequences for children of isolation and physical abuse, as contrasted with social interaction and parental affection? Sociologists emphasize that the social environment is a crucial part of an individual's socialization.

In addition to her physical condition, Genie showed psychological traits associated with neglect, as described by one of her psychiatrists:

If you gave [Genie] a toy, she would reach out and touch it, hold it, caress it with her fingertips, as though she didn't trust her eyes. She would rub it against her cheek to feel it. So, when I met her and she began to notice me standing beside her bed, I held my hand out and she reached out and took my hand and carefully felt my thumb and fingers individually, and then put my hand against her cheek. She was exactly like a blind child. (Rymer, 1993: 45)

Extensive therapy was used in an attempt to socialize Genie and develop her language abilities (Curtiss, 1977; Pines, 1981). These efforts met with limited success: In the 1990s, Genie was living in a board-and-care home for adults with intellectual disabilities (see Angier, 1993; Rigler, 1993; Rymer, 1993). From 2008, when the latest available reports on Genie were released by the news media, we know that she was fifty-one and living in a foster home where she had experienced further regression and was unable to speak (James, 2008). No more information about her is currently available.

What do you think we can learn from stories about children who have been the victims of maltreatment, particularly in relation to the socialization process? Cases like the ones we have described here are important to our understanding of the socialization process because they show the importance of this process. These cases also demonstrate how detrimental that social isolation and neglect can be to the well-being of people. Among other things, for children to experience proper grammatical development, they need linguistic stimulation from other people. If children do not hear language, they are unable to speak in sentences.

Child Maltreatment What do the terms *child maltreatment* and *child abuse* mean to you? When asked what constitutes child maltreatment, many people first think of cases that involve severe physical injuries or sexual abuse. However, neglect is the most frequent form of child maltreatment (Mattingly and Walsh, 2010). Child neglect occurs when children's basic needs—including emotional warmth and security, adequate shelter, food, health care, education, clothing, and protection—are not met, regardless of cause (Mattingly and Walsh, 2010). Neglect often involves acts of omission (where parents or caregivers fail to provide adequate physical or emotional care for children) rather than acts of commission (such as physical or sexual abuse). Neglect is the most common type of maltreatment (nearly 75 percent) among children under age eighteen (see ■ Figure 3.4). Of course, what is considered to be child maltreatment differs from society to society.

Social Isolation and Loneliness Up to this point, we have primarily looked at the effects of isolation on children in their formative years. However, social isolation and loneliness are central issues for persons across all age

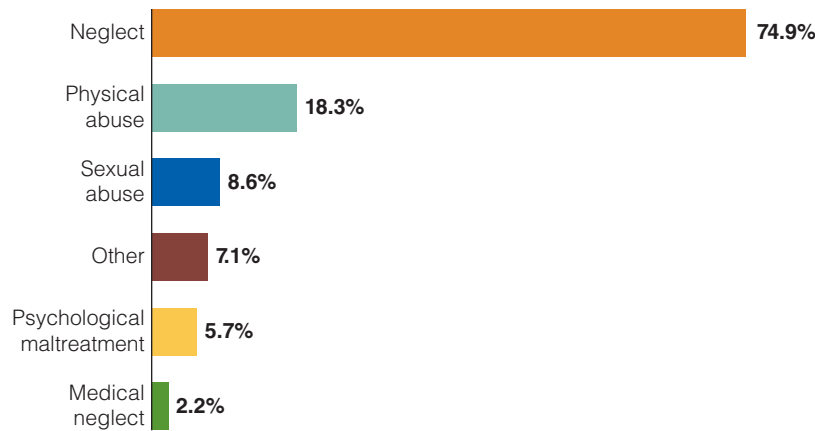


FIGURE 3.4 Types of Maltreatment Among Children Under Age 18.

Source: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Children's Bureau, 2017 Child Maltreatment Report.

*Does not add up to 100 percent because a child may have suffered from multiple forms of maltreatment and was counted once for each maltreatment type.

categories. In the twenty-first century, medical and social researchers continually produce new research documenting that lack of interaction and ongoing learning from others is problematic for everyone. Although we often think that we are more connected than people were in the past and that we have more “friends” than once would have been possible (because of Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, and other social media sites), the reality is that many people are lonely and have few people to confide in. Many studies have found that a large number of people are unhappy because of social isolation. According to one study, “People are so embarrassed about being lonely that no one admits it. Loneliness is stigmatized, even though everyone feels it at one time or another” (Seligman, 2009).

Living alone does not necessarily equal being lonely; people experience loneliness in different ways, and some people are more sensitive to social isolation than others. This is why the socialization process of learning how to interact with other people is important. Communicating with other people and learning from them links us to a larger social world and is energizing for us. Gerontologists who study aging and the issues associated with this process are the first to tell us that older individuals are among the most likely to be socially isolated because of the structure of contemporary families and the greater likelihood that one spouse (typically the wife) will outlive the other partner by a good number of years.

Social Psychological Theories of Human Development

Over the past hundred years, a variety of psychological and sociological theories have been developed not only to explain child abuse but also to describe how a positive process of socialization occurs. Although these are not sociological theories, it is important to be aware of the

contributions of Freud, Piaget, Kohlberg, and Gilligan because knowing about them provides us with a framework for comparing various perspectives on human development.

Freud and the Psychoanalytic Perspective

The basic assumption in Sigmund Freud's (1924) psychoanalytic approach is that behavior and personality originate from unconscious forces within individuals. Freud (1856–1939), who is known as the founder of psychoanalytic theory, developed his major theories in the Victorian era, when biological explanations of human behavior were prevalent (■ Figure 3.5). For example, Freud based his ideas on the belief that people have two basic tendencies: the urge to survive and the urge to procreate.

According to Freud (1924), human development occurs in three states that reflect different levels of the personality, which he referred to as the *id*, *ego*, and *superego*. The *id* is the component of personality that includes all of the individual's basic biological drives and needs that demand immediate gratification. For Freud, the newborn child's personality is all *id*, and from birth the child finds that urges for self-gratification—such as wanting to be held, fed, or changed—are not going to be satisfied immediately. However, Freud claimed that the *id* remains with people throughout their life in the form of *psychic energy*, the urges and desires that account for behavior.

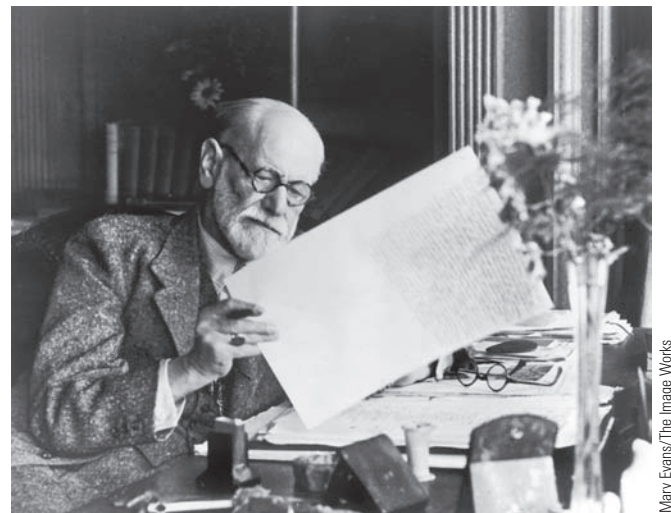


FIGURE 3.5 Sigmund Freud, founder of the psychoanalytic perspective.

id

Sigmund Freud's term for the component of personality that includes all of the individual's basic biological drives and needs that demand immediate gratification.

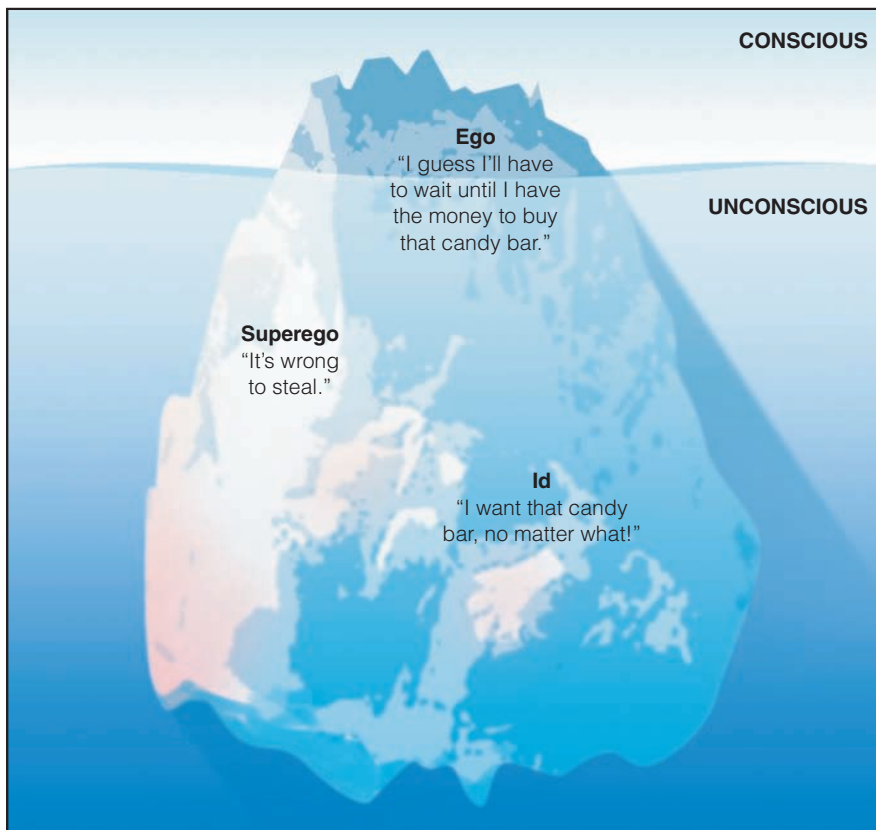


FIGURE 3.6 Freud's Theory of Personality

This illustration shows how Freud might picture a person's internal conflict over whether to commit an antisocial act such as stealing a candy bar. In addition to dividing personality into three components, Freud theorized that our personalities are largely unconscious—hidden from our normal awareness. To dramatize his point, Freud compared conscious awareness (portions of the ego and superego) to the visible tip of an iceberg. Most of personality—including the id, with its raw desires and impulses—lies submerged in our subconscious.

By contrast, the second level of personality—the *ego*—develops as infants discover that their most basic desires are not always going to be immediately met. The *ego* is the rational, reality-oriented component of personality that imposes restrictions on the innate pleasure-seeking drives of the id. The ego channels the desire of the id for immediate gratification into the most advantageous direction for the individual. The third level of personality—the superego—is in opposition to both the id and the ego. The *superego*, or conscience, consists of the moral and ethical aspects of personality. It is first expressed as the recognition of parental control and eventually matures as the child learns that parental control is a reflection of the values and moral demands of the larger society. When a person is well adjusted, the ego successfully manages the opposing forces of the id and the superego.

■ Figure 3.6 illustrates Freud's theory of personality.

Piaget and Cognitive Development

Jean Piaget (1896–1980), a Swiss psychologist, was a pioneer in the field of cognitive (intellectual) development (■ Figure 3.7). Cognitive theorists are interested in how

people obtain, process, and use information—that is, in how we think. Cognitive development relates to changes over time in how we think.

Piaget (1954) believed that in each stage of development (from birth through adolescence), children's activities are governed by their perception of the world around them. His four stages of cognitive development are organized around specific tasks that, when mastered, lead to the acquisition of new mental capacities, which then serve as the basis for the next level of development. Piaget emphasized that all children must go through each stage in sequence before moving on to the next one, although some children move through them faster than others.

1. *Sensorimotor stage* (birth to age two). During this period, children understand the world only through sensory contact and immediate action because they cannot engage in symbolic thought or use language. Toward the end of the second year, children comprehend *object permanence*; in other words, they start to realize that objects continue to exist even when the items are out of sight.



FIGURE 3.7 Jean Piaget, a pioneer in the field of cognitive development.



FIGURE 3.8 The Preoperational Stage

Psychologist Jean Piaget identified four stages of cognitive development, including the preoperational stage, in which children have limited ability to realize that physical objects may change in shape or appearance. Piaget showed children two identical beakers filled with the same amount of water. After the children agreed that both beakers held the same amount of water, Piaget poured the water from one beaker into a taller, narrower beaker and then asked the children about the amounts of water in each beaker. Those still in the preoperational stage believed that the taller beaker held more water because the water line was higher than in the shorter, wider beaker.

2. *Preoperational stage* (age two to seven). In this stage, children begin to use words as mental symbols and to form mental images. However, they are still limited in their ability to use logic to solve problems or to realize that physical objects may change in shape or appearance while still retaining their physical properties (see ■ Figure 3.8).
3. *Concrete operational stage* (age seven to eleven). During this stage, children think in terms of tangible objects and actual events. They can draw conclusions about the likely physical consequences of an action without always having to try the action out. Children begin to take the role of others and start to empathize with the viewpoints of others.
4. *Formal operational stage* (age twelve through adolescence). By this stage, adolescents are able to engage in highly abstract thought and understand places, things, and events they have never seen. They can think about the future and evaluate different options or courses of action.

Kohlberg and the Stages of Moral Development

Lawrence Kohlberg (1927–1987) elaborated on Piaget’s theories of cognitive reasoning by conducting a series of studies in which children, adolescents, and adults were presented with moral dilemmas that took the form of stories. Based on his findings, Kohlberg (1969, 1981) classified moral reasoning into three sequential levels:

1. *Preconventional level* (age seven to ten). Children’s perceptions are based on punishment and obedience. Evil behavior is that which is likely to be punished;

good conduct is based on obedience and avoidance of unwanted consequences.

2. *Conventional level* (age ten through adulthood). People are most concerned with how they are perceived by their peers and with how one conforms to rules.
3. *Postconventional level* (few adults reach this stage). People view morality in terms of individual rights; “moral conduct” is judged by principles based on human rights that transcend government and laws.

Gilligan’s View on Gender and Moral Development

Psychologist Carol Gilligan (b. 1936) noted that both Piaget and Kohlberg did not take into account how gender affects the process of social and moral development. According to Gilligan (1982), Kohlberg’s model was developed solely on the basis of research with male respondents, who often have different views from women on morality. She believes that men become more concerned with law and order but that women tend to analyze social relationships and the social consequences of behavior. Gilligan argues that men are more likely to use *abstract standards* of right and wrong when making moral decisions, whereas women are

ego

Sigmund Freud’s term for the rational, reality-oriented component of personality that imposes restrictions on the innate pleasure-seeking drives of the id.

superego

Sigmund Freud’s term for the conscience, consisting of the moral and ethical aspects of personality.

more likely to be concerned about the *consequences* of behavior. Does this constitute a “moral deficiency” on the part of either women or men? Not according to Gilligan, who believes that people make moral decisions according to both abstract principles of justice and principles of compassion and care.

Sociological Theories of Human Development

Although social scientists acknowledge the contributions of social psychological explanations of human development, sociologists believe that it is important to bring a sociological perspective to bear on how people develop an awareness of self and learn about the culture in which they live. Let’s look at symbolic interactionist, functional, and conflict approaches to describing the socialization process and its outcomes.

Symbolic Interactionist Perspectives on Socialization

According to a symbolic interactionist approach to socialization, we cannot form a sense of self or personal identity without intense social contact with others. How do we develop ideas about who we are? How do we gain a sense of self? The self represents the sum total of perceptions and feelings that an individual has of being a distinct, unique person—a sense of who and what one is. When we speak of the “self,” we typically use words such as *I*, *me*, *my*, *mine*, and *myself* (Cooley, 1998/1902). This sense of self (also referred to *self-concept*) is not present at birth; it arises in the process of social experience. **Self-concept** is the totality of our beliefs and feelings about ourselves. Four components make up our self-concept: (1) the physical self (“I am tall”), (2) the active self (“I am good at soccer”), (3) the social self (“I am nice to others”), and (4) the psychological self (“I believe in world peace”). Between early and late childhood, a child’s focus tends to shift from the physical and active dimensions of self toward the social and psychological aspects. Self-concept is the foundation for communication with others; it continues to develop and change throughout our lives.

Our *self-identity* is our perception about what kind of person we are and our awareness of our unique identity. Self-identity emerges when we ask the question “Who am I?” Factors such as individuality, uniqueness, and personal characteristics and personality are components of self-identity. As we have seen, socially isolated children do not have typical self-identities because they have had no experience of “humanness.” According to symbolic interactionists, we do not know who we are until we see ourselves as we believe that others see us. The perspectives of symbolic interactionists Charles Horton

Cooley and George Herbert Mead help us understand how our self-identity is developed through our interactions with others.

Cooley: Looking-Glass Self Charles Horton Cooley (1864–1929) was one of the first U.S. sociologists to describe how we learn about ourselves through social interaction with other people. Cooley (1998/1902) used the concept of the *looking-glass self* to describe how the self emerges. The *looking-glass self* refers to the way in which a person’s sense of self is derived from the perceptions of others. Our looking-glass self is based on our perception of *how* other people think of us. As ■ Figure 3.9 shows, the looking-glass self is a self-concept derived from a three-step process:

1. We imagine how our personality and appearance will look to other people.
2. We imagine how other people judge the appearance and personality that we think we present.
3. We develop a self-concept. If we think the evaluation of others is favorable, our self-concept is enhanced. If we think the evaluation is unfavorable, our self-concept is diminished. (Cooley, 1998/1902)

Because the looking-glass self is based on how we *imagine* other people view us, we may develop self-concepts based on an inaccurate perception of what other individuals think about us. Consider, for example, the individual who believes that other people see him or her as “fat” when, in actuality, he or she is a person of an average height, weight, and build. The consequences of such a false perception may lead to excessive dieting or health problems such as anorexia, bulimia, and other eating disorders.

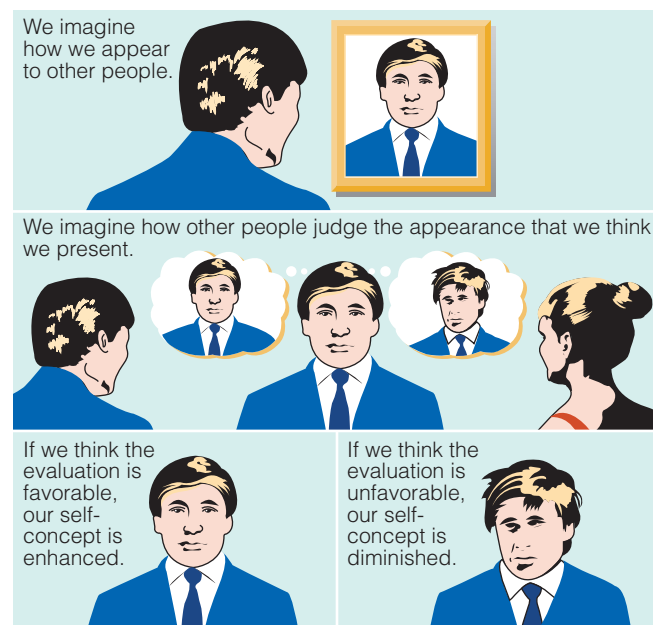


FIGURE 3.9 How the Looking-Glass Self Works

Mead: Role-Taking and Stages of the Self George Herbert Mead (1863–1931) extended Cooley’s insights by linking the idea of self-concept to **role-taking**—the process by which a person mentally assumes the role of another person or group in order to understand the world from that person’s or group’s point of view. Role-taking often occurs through play and games, as children try out different roles (such as being mommy, daddy, doctor, or teacher) and gain an appreciation of them. First, people come to take the role of the other (role-taking). By taking the roles of others, the individual hopes to ascertain the intention or direction of the acts of others. Then the person begins to construct his or her own roles (role-making) and to anticipate other individuals’ responses. Finally, the person plays at her or his particular role (role-playing).

According to Mead (1934), children in the early months of life do not realize that they are separate from others. However, they do begin early on to see a mirrored image of themselves in others. Shortly after birth, infants start to notice the faces of those around them, especially significant others, whose faces start to have meaning because they are associated with experiences such as feeding and cuddling. **Significant others** are those persons whose care, affection, and approval are especially desired and who are most important in the development of the self. Gradually, we distinguish ourselves from our caregivers and begin to perceive ourselves in contrast to them. As we develop language skills and learn to understand symbols, we begin to develop a self-concept. When we can represent ourselves in our minds as objects distinct from everything else, our self has been formed.

As Mead (1934) points out, the self has two sides—the “me” and the “I.” The “me” is what is learned by interaction with others in the larger social environment; it is the organized set of attitudes of others that an individual assumes. The “me” is the objective element of the self, which represents an internalization of the expectations and attitudes of others and the individual’s awareness of those demands. By contrast, the “I” is the person’s individuality—it is the response of the person to the attitudes of other individuals. We might think of the “me” as the social self and the “I” as the response to the “me.” According to Mead, the “I” develops first and the “me” takes form during the three stages of self-development (■ Figure 3.10):

1. During the *preparatory stage*, up to about age three, interactions lack meaning, and children largely imitate the people around them, particularly parents and other family members. At this stage, children are preparing for role-taking.
2. In the *play stage*, from about age three to five, children learn to use language and other symbols, thus enabling them to pretend to take the roles of specific people. At this stage, they begin to see themselves in relation to others, but they do not see role-taking as something they have to do.

3. During the *game stage*, which begins in the early school years, children understand not only their own social position but also the positions of others around them. In contrast to play, games are structured by rules, are often competitive, and involve a number of other “players.” At this time, children become concerned about the demands and expectations of others and of the larger society.

Mead’s concept of the **generalized other** refers to the child’s awareness of the demands and expectations of the society as a whole or of the child’s subculture. According to Mead, the generalized other is evident when a person takes into account other people and groups when he or she speaks or acts. In sum, both the “I” and the “me” are needed to form the social self. The unity of the two (the “generalized other”) constitutes the full development of the individual and a more thorough understanding of the social world.

More Recent Symbolic Interactionist Perspectives

Symbolic interactionist approaches emphasize that socialization is a collective process in which children are active and creative agents, not just passive recipients of the socialization process. From this view, childhood is a *socially constructed* category. As children acquire language skills and interact with other people, they begin to construct their own shared meanings. Sociologist William A. Corsaro (2011) refers to this as the “orb web model,” whereby the cultural knowledge that children possess consists not only of beliefs found in the adult world but also of unique interpretations from the children’s own peer culture. According to Corsaro, children create and share their own *peer culture*, which is an established set of activities, routines, and beliefs that are in some ways different from adult culture. This peer culture emerges through interactions as children “borrow” from the adult culture but transform it so that it fits their own situation. In fact, according to Corsaro, peer culture is the most significant arena in which children and young people acquire cultural knowledge.

self-concept

the totality of our beliefs and feelings about ourselves.

looking-glass self

Charles Horton Cooley’s term for the way in which a person’s sense of self is derived from the perceptions of others.

role-taking

the process by which a person mentally assumes the role of another person or group in order to understand the world from that person’s or group’s point of view.

significant others

those persons whose care, affection, and approval are especially desired and who are most important in the development of the self.

generalized other

George Herbert Mead’s term for a child’s awareness of the demands and expectations of the society as a whole or of a child’s subculture.



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Functionalist Perspectives on Socialization

As discussed in Chapter 1, functionalist theorists such as Talcott Parsons and Robert K. Merton saw socialization as the process by which individuals internalize social norms and values. They believed that socialization is important to societies as well as to individuals because social institutions must be maintained and preserved for a nation to survive. For these institutions to be efficient, individuals must play their roles appropriately, or dysfunctions will occur. Simply stated, the socialization process plays an integral part in teaching the next generation, as well as new arrivals, about how to conform to the rules of the game, and this keeps the society functioning properly. As a result of adequate socialization, people come to support a society that is stable and orderly. Individuals learn to accept the values, beliefs, and behavioral expectations that keep society, and sometimes the larger global community, functioning effectively.

Some functionalist theorists identify three stages of socialization. **Primary socialization** refers to the process of learning that begins at birth and occurs in the home and family; by contrast, **secondary socialization** refers to the process of learning that takes place outside the home—in settings such as schools, religious organizations, and the workplace—and helps individuals learn how to act in appropriate ways in various situations. Secondary socialization often occurs when we are teenagers and young adults. **Tertiary socialization** refers to the process of learning that takes place when adults move into new settings where they must accept certain ideas or engage in specific behaviors that are appropriate to that specific setting (see ■ Figure 3.11). For example, older persons entering a retirement community often have to internalize new social norms and values that are appropriate to the setting in which they now reside. From a functionalist approach, problems in the socialization process contribute not only to individual concerns but also to larger societal issues, such as high rates of crime and poverty, school dropouts and failures, and family discord.

Conflict Perspectives on Socialization

Based on an assumption that groups in society are engaged in a continuous power struggle for control of scarce resources, conflict theorists stress that socialization contributes to “false consciousness”—a lack of awareness and a distorted perception of the reality of class as it

FIGURE 3.10 According to sociologist George Herbert Mead, the self develops through three stages. In the preparatory stage, children imitate others; in the play stage, children pretend to take the roles of specific people; and in the game stage, children become aware of the “rules of the game” and the expectations of others.



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FIGURE 3.11 Some theorists identify three stages of socialization: primary, secondary, and tertiary. At what stage might socialization be occurring for the people working together in this photo?

affects all aspects of social life. As a result, socialization reaffirms and reproduces the class structure in the next generation rather than challenging existing conditions. For example, children in low-income families may be unintentionally socialized to believe that acquiring an education and aspiring to lofty ambitions are pointless because of existing economic conditions in the family. By contrast, middle- and upper-income families typically instill ideas of monetary and social success in children. As discussed later, schools may also provide different experiences to children depending on their gender, social class, racial-ethnic background, and other factors. This chapter's Concept Quick Review summarizes the major theories of human development and socialization.

Agents of Socialization

Agents of socialization are the persons, groups, or institutions that teach us what we need to know in order to participate in society. We are exposed to many agents of socialization throughout our lifetime; in turn, we have an influence on those socializing agents and organizations. In this section we look at the most pervasive agents of socialization in childhood—the family, the school, peer groups, and the mass media.

The Family

The family is the most important agent of socialization in all societies. From our infancy onward, our families transmit cultural and social values to us (■Figure 3.12). As discussed later in this book, families vary in size and structure. Some

families consist of two parents and their biological children, whereas others consist of a single parent and one or more children. Still other families reflect changing patterns of divorce and remarriage, and an increasing number are made up of same-sex partners and their children. Over time, patterns have changed in some two-parent families so that fathers, rather than mothers, are the primary daytime agents of socialization for their young children.

Theorists basing their assumptions on a somewhat functionalist perspective emphasize that families serve important functions in society because they are the basis for the procreation and socialization of children. Most of us form an emerging sense of self and acquire most of our beliefs and values within the family context. We also learn about the larger dominant culture (including language, attitudes, beliefs, values, and norms) and the primary subcultures to which our parents and other relatives belong.

Families are also the primary source of emotional support. Ideally, people receive love, understanding, security, acceptance, intimacy, and companionship within families. The role of the family is especially significant because young children have little social experience beyond the family's boundaries; they have no basis for comparing or evaluating how they are treated by their own family.

To a large extent, the family is where we acquire our specific social position in society. From birth, we are a part of the specific racial, ethnic, class, religious, and regional subcultural grouping of our family. Many parents socialize their children somewhat differently based on race, ethnicity, and class. Some families instruct their children about the unique racial-ethnic and/or cultural backgrounds of their parents and grandparents so that they will have a better

primary socialization

the process of learning that begins at birth and occurs in the home and family.

secondary socialization

the process of learning that takes place outside the home—in settings such as schools, religious organizations, and the workplace—and helps individuals learn how to act in appropriate ways in various situations.

tertiary socialization

the process of learning that takes place when adults move into new settings where they must accept certain ideas or engage in specific behaviors that are appropriate to that specific setting.

agents of socialization

the persons, groups, or institutions that teach us what we need to know in order to participate in society.

CONCEPT QUICK REVIEW

Psychological and Sociological Theories of Human Development and Socialization

Social Psychological Theories	Freud's psychoanalytic perspective	
	Piaget's cognitive development	Children go through four stages of cognitive (intellectual) development, moving from understanding only through sensory contact to engaging in highly abstract thought.
	Kohlberg's stages of moral development	People go through three stages of moral development, from avoidance of unwanted consequences to viewing morality based on human rights.
	Gilligan: gender and moral development	Men typically use abstract standards of right and wrong (like law and order) to make moral decisions; women often are more concerned with the social consequences of behavior.
Symbolic Interactionist Theories	Cooley's looking-glass self	A person's sense of self is derived from his or her perception of how others view him or her.
	Mead's three stages of self-development	In the preparatory stage, children prepare for role-taking. In the play stage, they pretend to take the roles of specific people. In the game stage, they learn to take into account the demands and expectations of the larger society and to develop a generalized other.
Functionalist Theories	Parsons's and Merton's views	The socialization process serves a central function for both individuals and society by helping people learn the appropriate norms, values, and behaviors that support social institutions and the larger social group.
Conflict Theories	Based on Marx's work (see Chapter 1)	Socialization contributes to false consciousness and reproduces inequalities in the class structure in the next generation as well as ignoring crucial differences based on gender, race/ethnicity, and other factors.



FIGURE 3.12 As this birthday celebration attended by several generations of family members illustrates, socialization enables society to “reproduce” itself.

appreciation of their heritage. Other families teach their children primarily about the dominant, mainstream culture in hopes that this will help their children get ahead in life.

Some upper-class parents focus on teaching their children about the importance of wealth, power, and privilege; however, many downplay this aspect and want their

children to make their own way in life, fearing that “spoiling them” will not be in their best interest. Middle-class parents typically have been focused on academic achievement and the importance of hard work to get ahead in life. However, starting with the global recession between 2007 and 2009 and continuing with the ongoing economic stress faced by many families in the 2010s and 2020s, the optimism that some persons in the middle class previously passed on to their children diminished as people feared for their economic future and sometimes saw their standard of living slip because of the high cost of housing, health care, education, and other necessities. Even then, some research showed that middle-class families felt slightly more secure financially than families in working-class and at lower-income levels, where parents often struggled to keep a roof overhead and food on the table. Parents at lower-income levels often felt that they had too little time to help their children learn about important things that might help them succeed in school and life (Kendall, 2002, 2011). Problems such as these contribute to and reinforce social inequality, and this is one of many reasons why conflict theorists are concerned about the long-term effects of the socialization process.

However, we should note that socialization is a bidirectional process in which children and young people socialize their agents of socialization, including parents, teachers, and others, as well as receiving socialization from these important agents (■ Figure 3.13). **Reciprocal socialization** is the process by which the feelings, thoughts,



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FIGURE 3.13 Students attend school to be educated. However, what else do young people learn in school beyond the academic curriculum? Sociologists differ in their responses to this question. What do you think?

appearance, and behavior of individuals who are undergoing socialization also have a direct influence on those agents of socialization who are attempting to influence them. Examples of this process include parents whose preferences in music, hairstyles, and clothing are influenced by their children and teachers whose choice of words (“cool,” “you know,” “LOL,” and other slang terms) is similar to that of their students.

The School

As the amount of specialized technical and scientific knowledge has expanded rapidly and as the amount of time that children are in educational settings has increased, schools continue to play an enormous role in the socialization of young people. For many people, the formal education process is an undertaking that lasts up to twenty years.

As the number of one-parent families and families in which both parents work outside the home has increased dramatically, the number of children in daycare and preschool programs has also grown rapidly. Nearly eleven million children younger than age five whose mothers are working are in some type of childcare arrangement where they spend, on average, about thirty-six hours a week. Potentially, more than fifteen million children under the age of six need childcare (Child Care Aware of America, 2014).

Generally, studies have found that quality daycare and preschool programs have a positive effect on the overall socialization of children. These programs provide children with the opportunity to have frequent interactions with teachers and to learn how to build their language

and literacy skills. High-quality programs also have a positive effect on the academic performance of children, particularly those from low-income families. Today, however, the cost of childcare programs has become a major concern for many families. For example, a year of center-based care for a four-year-old ranges from slightly more than \$4,500 in Tennessee to more than \$12,300 in Massachusetts (Child Care Aware of America, 2014).

In schools ranging from kindergarten through grade 12, students learn specific mandated knowledge and skills. However, schools also have a profound effect on children’s self-image, beliefs, and values. As children

enter school for the first time, they are evaluated and systematically compared with one another by the teacher. A permanent, official record is kept of each child’s personal behavior and academic activities. From a functionalist perspective, schools are responsible for (1) socialization, or teaching students to be productive members of society; (2) transmission of culture; (3) social control and personal development; and (4) the selection, training, and placement of individuals on different rungs in the society (Ballantine and Hammack, 2012).

In contrast, conflict theorists assert that students have different experiences in the school system depending on their social class, their racial–ethnic background, the neighborhood in which they live, their gender, and other factors. For example, Langhout and Mitchell (2008), after investigating the “hidden curriculum” in a low-income elementary school, concluded that African American and Latino boys were disproportionately punished for violating the rules (e.g., raising your hand to speak) when compared to their white and female counterparts. Thus, schools do not socialize children for their own well-being but rather for their roles in school and the workforce, where it is important to be well-behaved and “know your place.” Students who are destined for leadership or elite positions acquire different skills and knowledge than those who will enter working-class and middle-class occupations.

reciprocal socialization

the process by which the feelings, thoughts, appearance, and behavior of individuals who are undergoing socialization also have a direct influence on those agents of socialization who are attempting to influence them.

Peer Groups

As soon as we are old enough to have acquaintances outside the home, most of us begin to rely heavily on peer groups as a source of information and approval about social behavior. A **peer group** is a group of people who are linked by common interests, equal social position, and (usually) similar age. In early childhood, peer groups are often composed of classmates in daycare, preschool, and elementary school. Preadolescence—the latter part of the elementary school years—is an age period in which children’s peer culture has an important effect on how children perceive themselves and how they internalize society’s expectations (Robnett and Susskind, 2010). For example, boys who have a large proportion of same-gender friends are more likely to reject “feminine” traits, which they associate with girls. As a result, this may play a part in socializing them to have negative attitudes toward femininity that they display later in life (Robnett and Susskind, 2010). In adolescence, peer groups are typically made up of people with similar interests and social activities. As adults, we continue to participate in peer groups of people with whom we share common interests and comparable occupations, income, and/or social position.

Peer groups function as agents of socialization by contributing to our sense of “belonging” and our feelings of self-worth (■ Figure 3.14). As early as the preschool years, peer groups provide children with an opportunity for successful adaptation to situations such as gaining access to ongoing play, protecting shared activities from intruders, and building solidarity and mutual trust during ongoing activities (Corsaro, 2011). Unlike families and schools, peer groups provide children and adolescents with some degree of freedom from parents and other authority figures. They also teach cultural norms such as what constitutes “acceptable” behavior in a specific situation. Peer groups simultaneously reflect the larger culture and serve as a conduit for passing on culture to young people. As a result, the peer group is both a product of culture and one of its major transmitters.

Do you think there is such a thing as “peer pressure”? Most of us are acutely aware of such a social force. Individuals must earn their acceptance with their peers by conforming to a given group’s norms, attitudes, speech patterns, and dress codes. When we conform to our peer group’s expectations, we are rewarded; if we do not conform, we may be



FIGURE 3.14 The pleasure of participating in activities with friends is one of the many attractions of adolescent peer groups. What groups have contributed the most to your sense of belonging and self-worth?

ridiculed or even expelled from the group. Conforming to the demands of peers frequently places children and adolescents at cross-purposes with their parents. For example, young people are frequently under pressure to obtain certain valued material possessions (such as toys, clothing, athletic shoes, or smartphones); they then pass the pressure on to their parents through emotional pleas to purchase the desired items.

Mass Media

An agent of socialization that has a profound impact on both children and adults is the **mass media** that reach large groups of people in a short period of time. Although mass media may be written, spoken, or broadcast, we usually think of it as being composed of large-scale organizations that use print or electronic means (such as radio, television, film, and the Internet) to communicate with large numbers of people. Today, the term **media** includes social media such as YouTube, Instagram, Snapchat, Facebook, and Twitter; newspapers, magazines, and other printed publications that may have digital outlets and podcasts where audiences can interact with writers and the materials they have produced; films and movies, and the list could go on from here. For many years, the media have functioned as socializing agents in several ways: (1) They inform us about events; (2) introduce us to a wide variety of people; (3) provide an array of viewpoints on current issues; (4) make us aware of products and services that are available for us to purchase, and (5) entertain us by providing the opportunity to live vicariously (through other people’s experiences). Although most of us take for granted

that the media play an important part in contemporary socialization, we frequently underestimate the enormous influence that this agent of socialization often has on people's values, attitudes and behavior.

As you are aware, the use of social media such as Facebook and Twitter has grown exponentially in recent years. Today, 95 percent of teens report they have access to a smartphone, and 45 percent indicate that they are online "almost constantly" (Pew Research Center Internet and Technology, 2018). Within households where teens are present, smartphones and tablets are the fastest-growing devices. Social networking is a rapidly increasing layer on top of existing layers of other media use (■Figure 3.15).

Consider young people between the ages of thirteen and seventeen, for example. Research has shown that teens have greatly increased their use of digital media and are spending much more time online, texting, and using social media. For example, in one study, the percentage of twelfth graders who read a book or a magazine daily declined from 60 percent in the late 1970s to only 16 percent in 2016 (American Psychological Association, 2018). Smartphones and other mobile devices make it possible for young people to have access to media 24 hours per day, 7 days per week, with little time for other influences or activities in their life. Does this make a significant difference in childhood socialization? Future studies will no doubt continue to examine media's effects on children and teens to determine how increased use of media is related to grades, family interaction patterns, social networks, and other issues that are important in reaching maturity. Throughout this text, we look at examples of how the media socialize us in ways that we may or may not realize.



FIGURE 3.15 Texting, social networking, and using smartphones now provide us with instant access to friends, information, and entertainment around the clock. Today many people have been socialized to use a GPS app to help them find their current location and where they are going. How does this differ from socialization in the past?

Gender Socialization

Gender socialization is the aspect of socialization that contains specific messages and practices concerning the nature of being female or male in a specific group or society. Through the process of gender socialization, we learn about what attitudes and behaviors are considered to be appropriate for girls and boys, men and women, in a particular society. Different sets of gender norms are appropriate for females and males in the United States and most other nations. When do you first remember learning about gender-specific norms for your own appearance and behavior?

One of the primary agents of gender socialization is the family. In some families, this process begins even before the child's birth. Parents who learn the sex of the fetus through ultrasound or amniocentesis often purchase color-coded and gender-typed clothes, toys, and nursery decorations in anticipation of their daughter's or son's arrival. After the child's birth, parents may respond differently toward male and female infants; they often play more roughly with boys and talk more lovingly to girls. Throughout childhood and adolescence, boys and girls are typically assigned different household chores and given different privileges such as boys being given more latitude to play farther away from home than girls and being allowed to stay out later at night (■Figure 3.16).

In regard to gender socialization practices among various racial-ethnic groups, some sociologists have found that children typically are not taught to think of gender strictly in "male-female" terms. Both daughters and sons are socialized toward autonomy, independence, self-confidence, and nurturance of children. Sociologist Patricia Hill Collins (2000) has suggested that "othermothers" (women other than a child's biological mother) play an important part in the gender socialization and motivation of African American children, especially girls. Other mothers often serve as gender-role models and encourage women to become activists on behalf of their children and community (Collins, 2000). In the past, by contrast, Korean American and Latinx families typically engaged in more traditional gender socialization, but evidence in the 2020s suggests that this pattern has continued to change as young women are spending more time away from older family members and are gaining greater freedom of expression at school and in the workplace.

peer group

a group of people who are linked by common interests, equal social position, and (usually) similar age.

mass media

large-scale organizations that use print or electronic means (such as radio, television, film, and the Internet) to communicate with large numbers of people.

gender socialization

the aspect of socialization that contains specific messages and practices concerning the nature of being female or male in a specific group or society.



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FIGURE 3.16 Do you believe that what this child is learning here will have an influence on his actions in the future? What other childhood experiences might offset early gender socialization?

Like the family, schools, peer groups, and the media also contribute to our gender socialization. From kindergarten through college, teachers and peers reward gender-appropriate attitudes and behavior. Sports reinforce traditional gender roles through a rigid division of events into male and female categories. The media are also a powerful source of gender socialization; starting very early in childhood, children's books, television programs, movies, and music provide subtle and not-so-subtle messages about how boys and girls should act (see Chapter 10, "Sex, Gender, and Sexuality").

Racial–Ethnic Socialization

In addition to gender-role socialization, we receive racial socialization throughout our lives. **Racial socialization** is the aspect of socialization that contains specific messages and practices concerning the nature of our racial or ethnic status as it relates to our identity, interpersonal relationships, and location in the social hierarchy. Racial socialization includes direct statements regarding race, modeling behavior (wherein a child imitates the behavior of a parent or other caregiver) and indirect activities such as exposure to an environment that conveys a specific message about a racial or ethnic group ("We are better than they are," for example).

The most important aspects of racial identity and attitudes toward other racial–ethnic groups are passed down in families from generation to generation. As sociologist Martin Marger (1994: 97) notes, "Fear of, dislike for, and antipathy toward one group or another is learned in much the same way that people learn to eat with a knife or fork rather than with their bare hands or to respect others' privacy in personal matters." These beliefs can be transmitted in subtle and largely unconscious ways; they do not have to be taught directly or intentionally.

How early do you think racial socialization begins? Scholars have found that ethnic values and attitudes begin to crystallize among children as young as age four (Van Ausdale and Feagin, 2001). By this age, the society's ethnic

hierarchy has become apparent to the child. Some minority parents feel that racial socialization is essential because it provides children with the skills and abilities that they will need to survive in the larger society.

Socialization throughout the Life Course

Why is socialization a lifelong process? Throughout our lives, we continue to learn. Each time we experience a change in status (such as becoming a college student, graduating, or getting married), we learn a new set of rules, roles, and relationships. Even before we achieve a new status, we often participate in **anticipatory socialization**—the process by which knowledge and skills are learned for future roles. Many societies organize social activities according to age and gather data regarding the age composition of the people who live in that society. Some societies have distinct *rites of passage*, based on age or other factors that publicly dramatize and validate changes in a person's status. In the United States and other industrialized societies, the most common categories of age are childhood, adolescence, and adulthood (often subdivided into young adulthood, middle adulthood, and older adulthood).

Childhood

Some social scientists believe that a child's sense of self is formed at an early age and that it is difficult to change this self-perception later in life. Symbolic interactionists emphasize that during infancy and early childhood, family support and guidance are crucial to a child's developing self-concept. In some families, children are provided with emotional warmth, feelings of mutual trust, and a sense of security. These families come closer to our ideal cultural belief that childhood should be a time of carefree play, safety, and freedom from economic, political, and sexual responsibilities. However, other families reflect the discrepancy between cultural ideals and reality—children grow up in a setting characterized by fear, danger, and risks that are created by parental neglect, emotional maltreatment, or premature economic and sexual demands. Abused and neglected children often experience physical consequences, such as damage to their growing brains, which can lead to cognitive delays or emotional difficulties. Psychological problems can also occur that involve high-risk behavior such as smoking, alcohol or drug abuse, or similar activities. Other psychological problems manifest as low self-esteem, an inability to trust others, feelings of isolation and powerlessness, and denial of one's feelings.

Adolescence

Did you know that some societies have not had a period of time in the life of the individual known as "adolescence"? In contemporary societies, the adolescent (or teenage) years



Charles O. Cecil/Alamy Stock Photo

FIGURE 3.17 An important rite of passage for many Latinas is the *quinceañera*—a celebration of their fifteenth birthday and their passage into womanhood. Can you see how this occasion might also be a form of anticipatory socialization?

represent a buffer between childhood and adulthood. It is a time during which young people pursue their own routes to self-identity and adulthood. Anticipatory socialization is often associated with adolescence, with many young people spending time planning or being educated for future roles they hope to occupy. Although no specific rites of passage exist in the United States to mark *every* child's transition between childhood and adolescence or between adolescence and adulthood, some rites of passage are observed. For example, a celebration known as a bar mitzvah is held for some Jewish boys on their thirteenth birthday, and a bat mitzvah is held for some Jewish girls on their twelfth birthday; these events mark the occasion upon which young people accept moral responsibility for their own actions and the fact that they are now old enough to own personal property. Similarly, some Latinas are honored with the *quinceañera*—a celebration of their fifteenth birthday that marks their passage into young womanhood (■ Figure 3.17). Although it is not officially designated as a rite of passage, many of us think of the time when we get our first driver's license or graduate from high school as another way in which we mark the transition from one period of our life to the next.

Adolescence is often characterized by emotional and social unrest. In the process of developing their own identities, some young people come into conflict with parents, teachers, and other authority figures who attempt to restrict their freedom. Adolescents may also find themselves

caught between the demands of adulthood and their own lack of financial independence and experience in the job market.

The experiences of individuals during adolescence vary according to race, class, and gender. Based on their family's economic situation and personal choices, some young people leave high school and move directly into the world of work, whereas others pursue a college education and may continue to receive advice and financial support from their parents. Others are involved in both the world of work and the world of higher education as they seek to support themselves and to acquire more years of formal education or vocational/career training. Whether or not a student works while in college may affect the process of adjusting to college life (see ■ Figure 3.18). In the second decade of the twenty-first century, more college students are exploring international study programs as part of their adult socialization to help them gain new insights into divergent cultures and the larger world of which they are a part (see "Sociology in Global Perspective").

racial socialization

the aspect of socialization that contains specific messages and practices concerning the nature of our racial or ethnic status as it relates to our identity, interpersonal relationships, and location in the social hierarchy.

anticipatory socialization

the process by which knowledge and skills are learned for future roles.

SOCIOLOGY IN **Global Perspective**

Open Doors: Study Abroad and Global Socialization

[T]he first month or so of the study-abroad experience feels like a vacation in that everything is exciting and new. After this “honeymoon” period, the experience becomes something other than merely a vacation or fleeting visit. You start to relate to the people, the culture, and life in that country not from the eyes of a tourist passing through, but progressively from the eyes of those around you—the citizens who were born and raised there. That is the perspective which is unattainable without actually living in another country, and a perspective which I have come to appreciate and understand more fully as I settle back into life here back at home.

—JOHN R. R. Howie (2010), then a Boston College economics and Mandarin Chinese major, explained what studying abroad at Peking University, in Beijing, meant to him. Howie has since graduated and is now employed as a financial analyst in New York City.

Studying abroad is an important part of the college socialization process for preparing to live and work in an interconnected world. Here are a few interesting facts about studying abroad:

- About 332,727 U.S. students participated in study-abroad programs for credit in 2016–2017, and this number continues to increase each year.
- The United Kingdom, Italy, Spain, France, Germany, and China are the top destinations for study abroad; however, Ireland, Australia, Costa Rica, Japan, South Africa, and Mexico are also popular destinations.
- The top fields of study for U.S. study-abroad students are STEM. About 20 percent are studying business, 17 percent are studying in social science fields, 7.3 percent in foreign languages and international studies, and 6.3 percent in fine and applied arts.

- More than 60 percent of study-abroad students remain in their host country for a short-term stay (summer or eight weeks or less during the academic year).

Sociologists are interested in studying the profile of U.S. study-abroad students because the data provide interesting insights on differences in students’ participation. White students make up the vast majority of study-abroad students (70.8 percent). Other groups include Hispanic or Latinx (10.2 percent), Asian or Pacific Islander (8.2 percent), and black or African American (6.1 percent). Most students participating in study-abroad programs are women, who make up more than two-thirds (67.3 percent) of all study-abroad students, and men make up 32.7 percent (*Inside Higher Ed*, 2019).

Socialization for life in the global community is necessary for all students because of the increasing significance of international understanding and the need to learn how to live and work in a diversified nation and world. Even more important may be the opportunity for each student to gain direction and meaning in his or her own life. Do you think that studying abroad might make an important contribution to your own socialization while in college? Why or why not?

Reflect & Analyze

What are the positive aspects of study-abroad programs in the college socialization process? What are the limitations of such programs? If you are unable to participate in a study-abroad program, what other methods and resources might you use to gain “global socialization,” which could be beneficial in helping you meet your goals for the future?

Adulthood

One of the major differences between child socialization and adult socialization is the degree of freedom of choice. If young adults are able to support themselves financially, they gain the ability to make more choices about their own lives. In early adulthood (usually until about age forty), people work toward their own goals of creating relationships with others, finding employment, and seeking personal fulfillment. Of course, young adults continue to be socialized by their parents, teachers, peers, and the media, but they also learn new attitudes and behaviors. For example, when we marry or have children, we learn new roles as partners or parents.

Workplace (occupational) socialization is one of the most important types of early adult socialization. This type of socialization tends to be most intense immediately after a person makes the transition from school to the workplace; however, many people experience continuous workplace socialization as a result of having more than one career in their lifetime.

In middle adulthood—between the ages of forty and sixty-five—people begin to compare their accomplishments with their earlier expectations. This is the point at which people either decide that they have reached their goals or recognize that they have attained as much as they are likely to achieve.

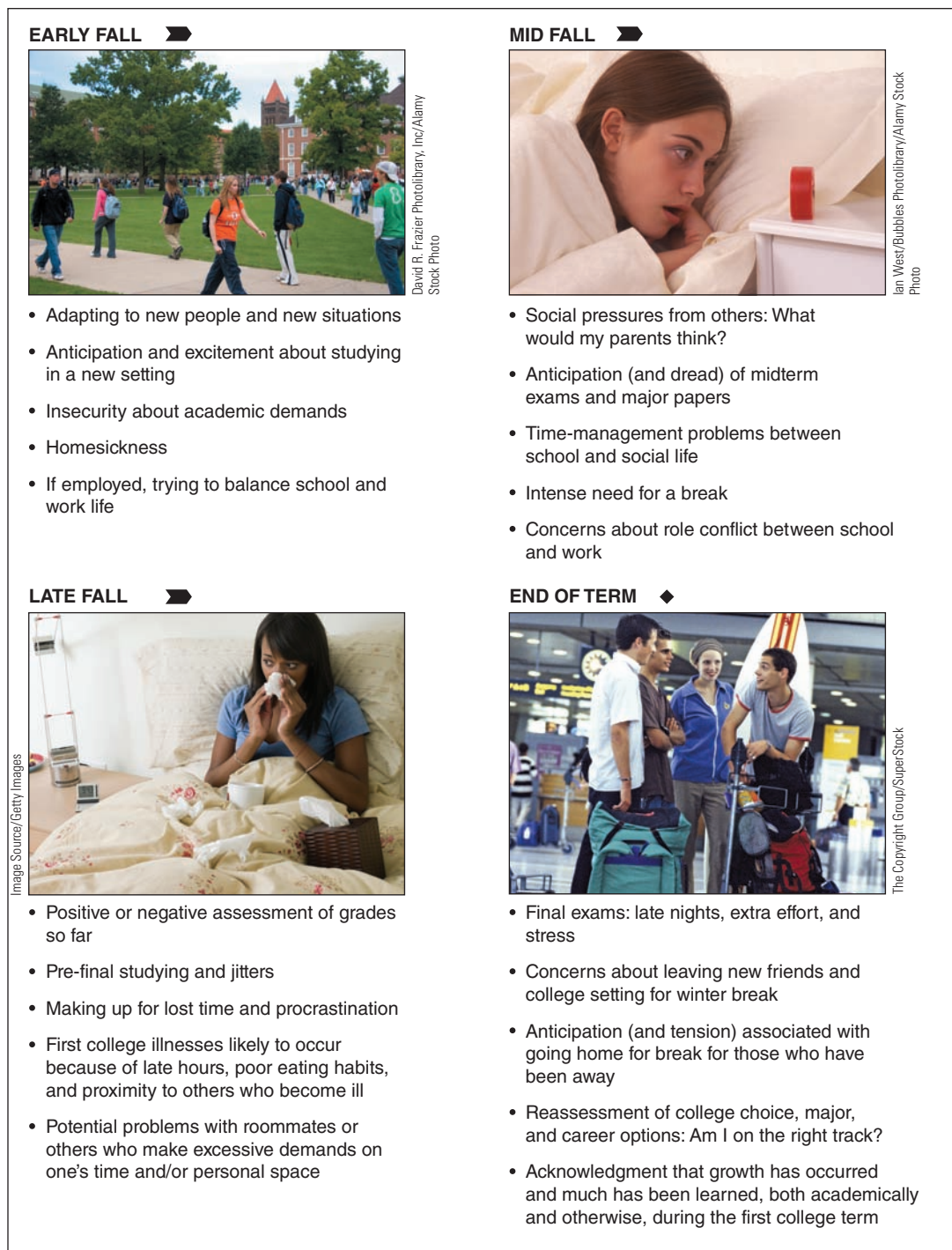


FIGURE 3.18 Time Line for First-Semester College Socialization

Source: Based on the author's observations of student life and on Kansas State University, 2010.

Some analysts divide late adulthood into three categories: (1) the “young-old” (ages sixty-five to seventy-four), (2) the “old-old” (ages seventy-five to eighty-five), and (3) the “oldest-old” (over age eighty-five). Others believe that these distinctions are arbitrary and that actual appearance and behavior are quite different based on people’s health status, socioeconomic level, and numerous other factors. Although these are somewhat arbitrary divisions, the

“young-old” are less likely to suffer from disabling illnesses, whereas some of the “old-old” are more likely to suffer such illnesses. Increasingly, studies in gerontology and the sociology of medicine have come to question these arbitrary categories and show that many persons defy the expectations of their age grouping based on their individual genetic makeup, lifestyle choices, and zest for living. Perhaps “old age” is what we make it!

Late Adulthood and Ageism

In older adulthood, some people are quite happy and content; others are not. Erik Erikson noted that difficult changes in adult attitudes and behavior occur in the last years of life, when people experience decreased physical ability, lower prestige, and the prospect of death. Older adults in industrialized societies may experience **social devaluation**—wherein a person or group is considered to have less social value than other persons or groups. Social devaluation is especially acute when people are leaving roles that have defined their sense of social identity and provided them with meaningful activity (■Figure 3.19).

Negative images regarding older persons reinforce **ageism**—prejudice and discrimination against people on the basis of age, particularly against older persons. Ageism is reinforced by stereotypes, whereby people have narrow, fixed images of certain groups. Older persons are often stereotyped as thinking and moving slowly; as being bound to themselves and their past, unable to change and grow; as being unable to move forward and often moving backward.

Negative images also contribute to the view held by some that women are “old” ten or fifteen years sooner than men. In popular films, male characters increase in leadership roles and powerful positions as they grow older; women

are either moved into the background or are given stereotypical roles that disparage gender and aging. Similarly, the multibillion-dollar cosmetics industry helps perpetuate the myth that age reduces the “sexual value” of women but increases it for men. Men’s sexual value is defined more in terms of personality, intelligence, and earning power than by physical appearance. For women, however, sexual attractiveness is based on youthful appearance. By idealizing this “youthful” image of women and playing up the fear of growing older, sponsors sell millions of products and services that claim to prevent or fix the “ravages” of aging.

Although not all people act on appearances alone, Patricia Moore, an industrial designer, found that many do. At age twenty-seven, Moore disguised herself as an eighty-five-year-old woman by donning age-appropriate clothing and placing baby oil in her eyes to create the appearance of cataracts. With the help of a makeup artist, Moore supplemented the “aging process” with latex wrinkles, stained teeth, and a gray wig. For three years, “Old Pat Moore” went to various locations, including a grocery store, to see how people responded to her:

When I did my grocery shopping while in character, I learned quickly that the Old Pat Moore behaved—and was treated—differently from the Young Pat



Sandy Huffaker/Corbis

FIGURE 3.19 Throughout life, our self-image is influenced by our interactions with others. How might the self-image of each of these women be influenced by other individuals in her social group?

Moore. When I was 85, people were more likely to jockey ahead of me in the checkout line. And even more interesting, I found that when it happened, I didn't say anything to the offender, as I certainly would at age 27. It seemed somehow, even to me, that it was okay for them to do this to the Old Pat Moore, since they were undoubtedly busier than I was anyway. And further, they apparently thought it was okay, too! After all, little old ladies have plenty of time, don't they? And then when I did get to the checkout counter, the clerk might start yelling, assuming I was deaf, or becoming immediately testy, assuming I would take a long time to get my money out, or would ask to have the price repeated, or somehow become confused about the transaction. What it all added up to was that people feared I would be trouble, so they tried to have as little to do with me as possible. And the amazing thing is that I began almost to believe it myself. . . . I think perhaps the worst thing about aging may be the overwhelming sense that everything around you is letting you know that you are not terribly important anymore. (Moore with Conn, 1985: 75–76)

Do you think we would find the same thing if we re-created Moore's study today? We might find out what many older persons already know—it is other people's *reactions* to their age, not their age itself, that place them at a disadvantage. Consider, for example, that researchers in one study searched on Facebook for groups that concentrate on older people and found eighty-four groups (with about 25,500 members) created by people between the ages of twenty and twenty-nine that were extremely derogatory, encouraged such things as banning older people from public activities such as shopping, infantilized them, or used negative terminology to describe them. Although Facebook policies on hate speech prohibit singling out people based on their sex, sexual orientation, gender, illness status, disability, race, ethnicity, national origin, or religion, no such policy exists in regard to age and the problem of ageism (Adler, 2013).

Many older people buffer themselves against ageism by continuing to view themselves as being in middle adulthood long after their actual chronological age would suggest otherwise. Other people begin a process of resocialization to redefine their own identity as mature adults.

Resocialization

Resocialization is the process of learning a new and different set of attitudes, values, and behaviors from those in one's background and previous experience. Resocialization may be voluntary or involuntary. In either case, people undergo changes that are much more rapid and pervasive than the gradual adaptations that socialization usually involves.

Voluntary Resocialization

Resocialization is voluntary when we assume a new status (such as becoming a student, an employee, or a retiree) of our own free will. Sometimes, voluntary resocialization involves medical or psychological treatment or religious conversion, in which case the person's existing attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors must undergo strenuous modification to a new regime and a new way of life. For example, resocialization for adult survivors of emotional/physical child abuse includes extensive therapy in order to form new patterns of thinking and action, somewhat like Alcoholics Anonymous and its twelve-step program, which has become the basis for many other programs dealing with addictive behavior.

Involuntary Resocialization

Involuntary resocialization occurs against a person's wishes and generally takes place within a **total institution**—a place where people are isolated from the rest of society for a set period of time and come under the control of the officials who run the institution (Goffman, 1961a). Military boot camps, jails and prisons, concentration camps, and some mental hospitals are considered total institutions. Involuntary resocialization is a two-step process. First, people are stripped of their former selves—or depersonalized—through a degradation ceremony (Goffman, 1961a). For example, inmates entering prison are required to strip, shower, and wear assigned institutional clothing. In the process, they are searched, weighed, fingerprinted, photographed, and given no privacy even in showers and restrooms. Their official identification becomes not a name but a number. In this abrupt break from their former existence, they must leave behind their personal possessions and their family and friends. The depersonalization process continues as they are required to obey rigid rules and to conform to their new environment (■ Figure 3.20).

The second step in the resocialization process occurs when the staff members at an institution attempt to build a more compliant person. A system of rewards and punishments (such as providing or withholding television or exercise privileges) encourages conformity to institutional norms.

social devaluation

a situation in which a person or group is considered to have less social value than other persons or groups.

ageism

prejudice and discrimination against people on the basis of age, particularly against older persons.

resocialization

the process of learning a new and different set of attitudes, values, and behaviors from those in one's background and previous experience.

total institution

Erving Goffman's term for a place where people are isolated from the rest of society for a set period of time and come under the control of the officials who run the institution.

Individuals respond to involuntary resocialization in different ways. Some people are rehabilitated; others become angry and hostile toward the system that has taken away their freedom. Although the assumed purpose of involuntary resocialization is to reform people so that they will conform to societal standards of conduct after their release, the ability of total institutions to modify offenders' behavior in a meaningful manner has been widely questioned. In many prisons, for example, inmates may conform to the norms of the prison or of other inmates but have little respect for the norms and the laws of the larger society.

Looking Ahead: Socialization, Social Change, and Your Future

What do you think socialization will be like in the future? The family is likely to remain the institution that most fundamentally shapes and nurtures people's personal values and self-identity. However, other institutions, including education, religion, and the media, will continue to exert a profound influence on individuals of all ages. A central value-oriented issue facing parents and teachers as they attempt to socialize children is the dominance of the Internet, social media, and television, which make it possible for children and young people to experience many things outside their homes and schools and to communicate routinely with people around the world.

The socialization process in colleges and universities will become more diverse as students have an even wider

array of options in higher education, including attending traditional classes in brick-and-mortar buildings, taking independent-study courses, enrolling in online courses and degree programs, participating in study-abroad programs, and facing options that are unknown at this time. However, it remains to be seen whether newer approaches to socialization in higher education will be more effective and less stressful than current methods (see "You Can Make a Difference" to learn how some students are working to reduce stress in their college environment).

A very important area of social change in regard to socialization has occurred with the distinction between "digital natives" and "digital immigrants" because people in each category supposedly see the world fundamentally differently. Also known as the Net Generation, Millennials (Generation Y), or Generation Z (born from mid-1990s to an as-yet-undesignated point in the 2020s), individuals in the category of *digital natives* were literally born into the digital world, grew up with the Internet, and think absolutely nothing of the rapid changes that so quickly brought digital technology into all aspects of our lives. These are people who have never known life without smartphones, computers, video games, digital music players, and other tools of the digital age. In sum, today's children and young people *think and process information fundamentally differently* from their predecessors who are often referred to as *digital immigrants*—persons who originally used older technologies and have had to learn to adapt to newer digital technologies. Digital immigrants sometimes have to be resocialized to think and live in a world of digital immersion. For example, you might communicate using



Journal Courier/The Image Works

FIGURE 3.20 New inmates are taught how to order their meals. Two fingers raised means two portions. There is no talking in line. Inmates must eat all their food. This “ceremony” suggests how much freedom and dignity an inmate loses when beginning the resocialization process.

YOU CAN **Make a Difference**

What Stresses Out College Students and What to Do About It?

Many lists have been made of what stresses out college students. Some of the most frequent answers include fear of the unknown when it comes to classes and interpersonal relationships, concerns about the ability to relate well with other students, homesickness, worries about finances and the ability to find a job after college, family stressors at home (such as divorce of parents or problems their brothers and sisters may be having), and the list goes on and on. (Reed, 2015)

For these reasons, colleges provide many resources to help students cope with stress. There are also things that you can do to make a difference in your own life and in that of your friends and peers at school. Here are a few thoughts on how to reduce stress in college:

- *Don't stress about being stressed.* Sometimes we worry even more when we realize that we are feeling pressure to succeed, to get along well with others, and to fit into our surroundings. If you are taking classes online, you have to learn how to interact with professors and others with whom you are not in face-to-face contact on a regular basis. Sometimes it is best just to admit that you are stressed out and then to set up a plan for handling the problems that loom before you. Don't wait to seek help from others, and don't wait until the last minute to ask professors and other school personnel for assistance when you need it.
- *Get more sleep.* This may sound odd when you are already concerned about there not being enough hours in your day; however, it is good advice. A major stressor of college students is a chronic lack of sleep. Professionals suggest that college students should get a minimum of eight hours of sleep every night, but 70 percent of students in one survey reported that they get far less sleep than that. If we are organized and rested, we can be much more productive and get more work done in a shorter period of time.
- *Stay well.* Getting sick is one of the major ways that college students get behind in their studies, work,

and personal life. Colds and flu are among the key types of illnesses that affect students' studies and class attendance. Washing hands thoroughly and using hand sanitizer are excellent ways to reduce the likelihood of becoming sick. Dress warmly in cold weather, cultivate good eating habits, and squeeze in time for exercise even when you think you don't have time.

- *Plan some quiet time and some fun time.* Even when you are the busiest, you need time to think, meditate, and engage in activities you find relaxing. We all need some personal space and a place where we can have some quality quiet time without lots of other people around. You may have to carve out a space where you can study and spend personal time without interruptions from other students, friends, and family members.
- *Gain a new perspective on stress by helping other people cope with their own stress.* If you know someone who appears to be stressed out, pass on positive suggestions about how you or others you know have coped with a similar situation. Perhaps even better, listen to the other person and give him or her a chance to voice concerns without providing "the answer" for these issues. Often the people we help through difficult times in college are the same people we later identify as our lifelong friends. Sharing helps us to talk about our problems and coping strategies. It provides us with an important socialization experience in learning how to deal with other people and how to learn from them about their life experiences and strategies for coping with stressful circumstances.

Reflect & Analyze

What other suggestions do you have for dealing with stress at college and elsewhere? How might social media increase stress in your life? How might social media be a tool to reduce your stress? What do you think?

social media such as Snapchat, Instagram, or Facebook while your parents or other older adults might use email or text messaging. Some may even actually write a letter and send it by mail or make a phone call, approaches to communication that seem very outdated to many digital natives.

Socialization in the future is linked to new technologies that are being developed now. Some people in the United States, and many people throughout the world, do not have

access to the digital technology that many of us take for granted. These are important social, economic, and political issues for now and the future. One thing remains clear: The socialization process will continue to be a dynamic and important part of our life whether we are learning information from parents and teachers, from a smartphone, or from artificial intelligence such as a robot. What other devices do you see playing an important role in the future? Will drones routinely be delivering products to our homes soon?

Q&A Chapter Review

Use these questions and answers to check how well you've achieved the learning objectives set out at the beginning of this chapter.

LO1 What is the extent to which people would become human beings without adequate socialization?

Socialization is the lifelong process through which individuals acquire their self-identity and learn the physical, mental, and social skills needed for survival in society. The kind of person we become depends greatly on what we learn during our formative years from our surrounding social groups and social environment. Social contact is essential in developing a self, or self-concept, which represents an individual's perceptions and feelings of being a distinct or separate person. Much of what we think about ourselves is gained from our interactions with others and from what we perceive that others think of us.

LO2 What is the sociological perspective on human development?

According to Charles Horton Cooley's concept of the looking-glass self, we develop a self-concept as we see ourselves through the perceptions of others. Our initial sense of self is typically based on how our families perceive and treat us. George Herbert Mead suggested that we develop a self-concept through role-taking and learning the rules of social interaction. According to Mead, the self is divided into the "I" and the "me." The "I" represents the spontaneous and unique traits of each person. The "me" represents the internalized attitudes and demands of other members of society.

LO3 How do functionalist and conflict theorists' perspectives differ on the roles that families play in the socialization process?

Theorists using a functionalist perspective emphasize that families serve important functions in society because they are the primary locus for the socialization of children. The family influences an emerging sense of self and the acquisition of beliefs and values. Families are also the primary source of emotional support. Ideally, people receive love, understanding, security, acceptance, intimacy, and companionship within families. On the other hand, conflict theorists stress that socialization contributes to false consciousness—a lack of awareness and a distorted perception of the reality of class as it affects all aspects of social life. As a result, socialization reaffirms and reproduces the class structure in the next generation rather than challenging the conditions that presently exist.

LO4 How do schools socialize children in both formal and informal ways?

Schools continue to play an enormous role in the socialization of young people. Schools primarily teach knowledge

and skills but also have a profound influence on the self-image, beliefs, and values of children.

LO5 What role do peer groups and media play in socialization now, and what role might these agents play in the future?

Peer groups contribute to our sense of belonging and self-worth and are a key source of information about acceptable behavior. Peer groups simultaneously reflect the larger culture and serve as a conduit for passing on culture to young people. The media function as socializing agents by (1) informing us about world events; (2) introducing us to a wide variety of people; (3) providing an array of viewpoints on current issues; (4) making us aware of products and services that, if we purchase them, will supposedly help us to be accepted by others; and (5) providing an opportunity to live vicariously through other people's experiences.

LO6 What are ways in which gender socialization and racial-ethnic socialization occur?

Through the process of gender socialization, we learn about what attitudes and behaviors are considered to be appropriate for girls and boys, men and women, in a particular society. One of the primary agents of gender socialization is the family. Racial socialization includes direct statements regarding race, modeling behavior, and indirect activities such as exposure to an environment that conveys a specific message about a racial or ethnic group.

LO7 What are the stages in the life course, and why is the process of socialization important in each stage?

Socialization is ongoing throughout the life course—from childhood to adolescence to adulthood and old age. We learn knowledge and skills for future roles through anticipatory socialization. Throughout childhood, we are socialized by our parents, schools, peers, and other groups. Workplace (occupational) socialization is one of the most important types of early adult socialization.

LO8 What is the difference between voluntary and involuntary resocialization?

Resocialization is the process of learning new attitudes, values, and behaviors, either voluntarily or involuntarily. Resocialization is voluntary when we assume a new status (such as becoming a student) of our own free will. Involuntary resocialization occurs against a person's wishes and generally takes place within a total institution, such as a jail or prison.

KEY Terms

ageism 86	mass media 80	self-concept 74
agents of socialization 77	peer group 80	significant others 75
anticipatory socialization 82	primary socialization 76	social devaluation 86
ego 72	racial socialization 82	socialization 67
gender socialization 81	reciprocal socialization 78	sociobiology 68
generalized other 75	resocialization 87	superego 72
id 71	role-taking 75	tertiary socialization 76
looking-glass self 74	secondary socialization 76	total institution 87

Questions for Critical Thinking

- 1 Consider the concept of the looking-glass self. How do you think others perceive you? Do you think most people perceive you correctly?
- 2 What are your “I” traits? What are your “me” traits? Which ones are stronger?
- 3 What are some different ways that you might study the effect of digital technology on the socialization of children? How could you isolate digital technology variables from other variables that influence children’s socialization?
- 4 How is socialization different in the digital age? Do you believe that a distinction can actually be made between “digital natives” and “digital immigrants”? Why or why not?

Answers to Sociology Quiz

Socialization and the College Experience

1	False	Studies have concluded that although professors are important in helping students learn about the academic side of the college experience, our friends and acquaintances help us adapt to higher education.
2	False	Slightly more than 85 percent of first-year students at four-year colleges report that they have studied with other students. Similar data are not available for students at two-year schools. How might data for this group differ?
3	True	The college environment is stressful for many students, who find that it is an abrupt change from high school because workloads increase, they are expected to manage their time independently, and grades become increasingly important for a person’s future endeavors.
4	True	The competitive nature of the admission process in law schools and medical schools virtually guarantees that new students will be surrounded by classmates who were exceptional students during their undergraduate years. However, this level of achievement may be a source of stimulation for some students rather than a source of stress.
5	True	Some amount of academic stress may be positive in helping students reach their academic and career goals; however, excessive academic stress may be detrimental if it results in high levels of psychological stress or problematic behaviors such as alcohol abuse.
6	False	Studies have found that stress levels among college students are higher than those of people entering a new occupation or profession. For this reason, students are encouraged to develop coping skills and build support networks of friends, family, and others.
7	False	Most research has not shown a significant relationship between the number of hours worked and levels of stress among students. Earning money for school and personal expenses appears to offset additional time and responsibility in the workplace.
8	True	The top stressors most frequently reported in college are getting good grades and completing schoolwork. However, first-year college students also report that changes in eating and sleeping habits, increased workloads and new responsibilities, and going home for holidays and other breaks are major sources of stress for them.

Source: *Chronicle of Higher Education*, 2019.





Social Structure and Interaction in Everyday Life

4

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- 1 Explain** why social structure is important in our interaction with others.
- 2 Distinguish** between ascribed, achieved, and master statuses.
- 3 Explain** the concepts of role, role expectation, role performance, role conflict, role strain, and role exit.
- 4 Discuss** “groups” as an important component of social structure.
- 5 Compare** the functionalist and conflict views on social institutions.
- 6 Compare** the types of societies that are based on various levels of subsistence technology.
- 7 Explain** the views of Emile Durkheim and Ferdinand Tönnies on the processes of stability and change in the social structure of societies.
- 8 Discuss** the symbolic interactionist perspective on the social construction of reality and the self-fulfilling prophecy.
- 9 Compare** ethnomethodology analysis and dramaturgical analysis as two research methods for observing how people deal with everyday life.
- 10 Discuss** how the sociology of emotions and the study of nonverbal communication add to our understanding of human behavior.

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SOCIOLOGY & Everyday Life

Does Social Structure Contribute to Homelessness?

Sociologist Matthew Desmond has written an informative and touching book, *Evicted: Poverty and Profit in the American City* (2016), about the plight of people living in some of the poorest neighborhoods in the United States where many families end up living in homeless shelters, couch-surfing with friends and family, or sleeping on the streets. Women and children are particularly affected by the pressing social problem of homelessness, which some political leaders and other influential persons blame on laziness or lack of worth of the individuals involved. However, Desmond skillfully shows that problems of eviction and homelessness are intricately related to larger social structures in societies and to people's everyday interactions with others. This brief excerpt from his discussion on eviction and gender and race and poverty in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, highlights how women and men of color are differentially affected by social structural issues:

In Milwaukee's poorest black neighborhoods, eviction had become commonplace—especially for women. In those neighborhoods, 1 female renter in 17 was evicted through the court system each year, which was twice as often as



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How are problems such as homelessness related to the larger social structures in our society? How are women and men of color differentially affected by these social structural issues?

Have you driven by an apartment or a house and seen mattresses, furniture, clothing, and other family possessions literally dumped on the sidewalk or in the street? While this is an unfamiliar sight to some people; for others, being evicted from one's residence has become a way of life. Although legal dictionaries have a variety of definitions of eviction, the key component of all definitions includes the act of being kicked out or expelled from premises where a person resides, typically by a landlord who takes legal action against the tenant for nonpayment of rent or for breaching (violating) the terms of a lease or rental agreement. Sometimes evictions occur through a legal action; other times, landlords or property managers take it upon themselves to remove a family's possessions from the property where they have lived or make it impossible for the family to continue to live on the property by actions such as turning off their utilities or changing the door locks. Unfortunately, evictions have become a common, everyday occurrence in the lives of many poor people, particularly single mothers who have several young children living with them (Desmond, 2016).

Endeavors such as finding housing, being evicted, and seeking shelter afterward ultimately are not individual processes that happen in isolation in our society. The activities of gaining or losing housing or seeking temporary shelter are linked to the larger social structure of the nation in which we live. In this chapter we look at the relationship

between social structure and social interaction in everyday life. In the process, we examine social problems such as homelessness that may be either reduced or increased because of social structure and our patterns of social interaction in communities and nations.

Let's start by talking about how sociologists define social structure and social interaction. **Social structure** is the complex framework of societal institutions (such as the economy, politics, law, education, and religion) and the social practices (such as rules and social roles) that make up a society and establish certain limits on people's behavior. This structure is essential for the stability and ultimate survival of society. It is also important for the well-being of individuals because social structure provides a web of familial support and social relationships that connects each of us to the larger society. You may be wondering how homelessness fits in to this definition. Quite simply, many people who have been evicted or who are otherwise homeless have lost this vital linkage to the larger society. They often experience a loss of personal dignity and a sense of moral worth because of their "homeless" condition. Problems of homelessness may be reduced or increased by how social institutions in their city, state, and nation deal with the issues associated with poverty, lack of affordable housing, and many other factors that contribute to inequality.

Along with these larger social structural patterns found in the social world of which we are a part, our daily interactions with others are also an important ingredient in the framework of our daily lives. **Social interaction** is the process by which people act toward or respond to

men from those neighborhoods and nine times as often as women from the city's poorest white areas. Women from black neighborhoods made up 9 percent of Milwaukee's population and 30 percent of its evicted tenants.

If incarceration had come to define the lives of men from impoverished black neighborhoods, eviction was shaping the lives of women. Poor black men were locked up. Poor black women were locked out. (Desmond, 2016: 98)

How Much Do You Know About Persons Who Are Homeless and the Social Structure of Homelessness?

TRUE	FALSE	
T	F	1 Local, state, and federal assistance to homeless people has shrunk in recent years.
T	F	2 A majority of people who are counted as homeless live on the streets or in cars, abandoned buildings, or other places not intended for human habitation.
T	F	3 Many homeless people have full-time employment.
T	F	4 Homelessness is affected by both income and the affordability of available housing.
T	F	5 Homeless people typically panhandle (beg for money) so that they can buy alcohol or drugs.
T	F	6 Shelters for the homeless consistently have clients who sleep on overflow cots, in chairs, in hallways, and in other nonstandard sleeping arrangements.
T	F	7 The United States has had homeless people throughout its history.
T	F	8 "Doubled-up" populations (people who live with friends, family, or other nonrelatives for economic reasons) have decreased in recent years.

Answers can be found at the end of the chapter.

other people, and it is the foundation for all relationships and groups in society. As discussed in Chapter 3, we learn virtually all of what we know from our interactions with other people. Socialization is a small-scale process, whereas social structure is a much more encompassing framework. Before reading on, learn more about people who are homeless and how homelessness is related to social structure and interaction by taking the "Sociology and Everyday Life" quiz. ●

Social Structure: The Macrolevel Perspective

We have talked about how sociologists define social structure, but what does the term *social structure* mean to you? Social structure is very important in our social world because it provides the framework within which we interact with others. This framework is an orderly, fixed arrangement of parts that together make up the whole group or society (see ■ Figure 4.1). You will notice that "Society" is at the top of this figure. As you will recall from Chapter 1, a *society* is a large social grouping that shares the same geographical territory and is subject to the same political authority and dominant cultural expectations. Note also that the social

structure of a society has several essential elements: social institutions, statuses and roles, and social groups.

Functionalist theorists emphasize that social structure is essential because it creates order and predictability in a society. Social structure is also important for our human development. As discussed in Chapter 3, we develop a self-concept as we learn the attitudes, values, and behaviors of the people around us. When these attitudes and values are part of a predictable structure, it is easier to develop that self-concept.

Social structure gives us the ability to interpret the social situations we encounter. How about the social structure in your own life? What about your family,

social structure

the complex framework of societal institutions (such as the economy, politics, and religion) and the social practices (such as rules and social roles) that make up a society and that organize and establish limits on people's behavior.

social interaction

the process by which people act toward or respond to other people; the foundation for all relationships and groups in society.

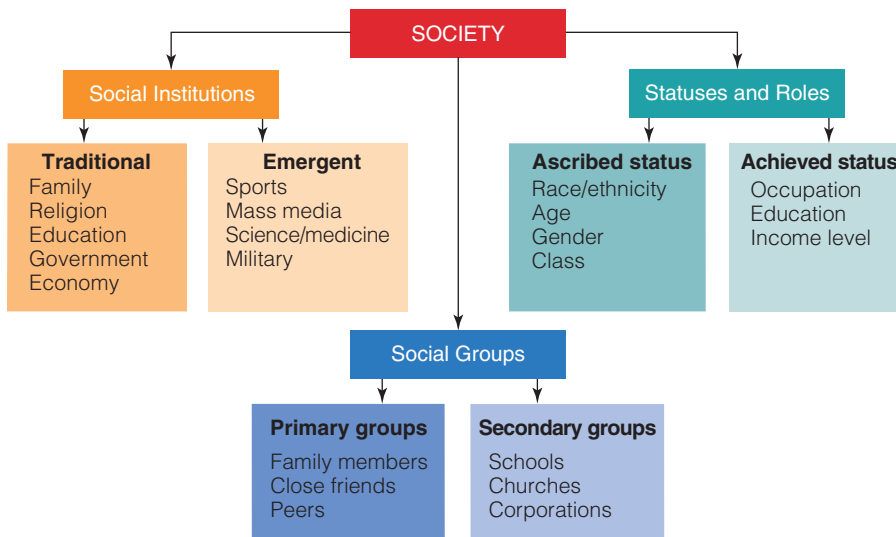


FIGURE 4.1 Social Structure Framework

your schools, and the police? For example, we expect our families to care for us, our schools to educate us, and our police to protect us. When our circumstances change dramatically, most of us feel an acute sense of anxiety because we do not know what to expect or what is expected of us. People who have been evicted and other newly homeless individuals are an example of this anxiety. Some of them feel disoriented because they do not know how to function in their new setting. The person is likely to ask such questions as “How will I survive on the streets?” “Where do I go to get help?” “Should I stay at a shelter?” and “Where can I get a job?” Social structure helps people make sense out of their environment even when they find themselves on the streets.

By contrast, conflict theorists maintain that there is more to social structure than is readily visible and that we must explore the deeper, underlying structures that determine social relations in a society. For example, classical economist and social theorist Karl Marx suggested that the way economic production is organized is the most important structural aspect of any society and that it puts some individuals at a distinct disadvantage. According to Marx, in capitalistic societies, where a few people control the labor of many, the social structure reflects a system of relationships of domination among categories of people (e.g., owner–worker, employer–employee, and landlord–tenant).

Social structure creates boundaries that define which persons or groups will be the “insiders” and which will be the “outsiders.” *Social marginality* is the state of being part insider and part outsider in the social structure. Early sociologist Robert Park (1928) coined this term to refer to persons (such as immigrants) who simultaneously share the life and traditions of two distinct groups. Social marginality results in stigmatization. A *stigma* is any physical or social attribute or sign that so devalues a person’s social identity

that it disqualifies the person from full social acceptance (Goffman, 1963b). A convicted criminal wearing a prison uniform is an example of a person who has been stigmatized; the uniform says that the person has done something wrong and should not be allowed unsupervised outside the prison walls.

Components of Social Structure

The social structure of a society includes its social positions, the relationships among those positions, and the kinds of resources attached to each of the positions. Social structure also includes all the groups

that make up society and the relationships among those groups (Smelser, 1988). We begin by examining the social positions that are closest to you, the individual.

Status

A **status** is a socially defined position in a group or society characterized by certain expectations, rights, and duties. Statuses exist independently of the specific people occupying them; the statuses of professional athlete, rock musician, professor, college student, and homeless person all exist exclusive of the specific individuals who occupy these social positions. Think about your own college experience. Although thousands of new students arrive on college campuses each year to occupy the status of first-year student, the status of college student and the expectations attached to that position have remained relatively stable for many years.

What do you think of when you hear the word *status*? Does it refer only to high-level positions in society? Not in the sociological sense. Although many people equate the term with high levels of prestige, sociologists use it to refer to all socially defined positions—high rank and low rank. For example, the positions of “United States Director of Housing and Urban Development” and that of a “sheltered homeless person” who is living in an emergency shelter are both social statuses but very different in how they are perceived by other people.

What statuses do you occupy? Take a moment to ask yourself the question “Who am I?” To determine who you are, you must think about your social identity, which is derived from the statuses you occupy and is based on your status set. A **status set** comprises all the statuses that a person occupies at a given time. For example, Maria may be a psychologist, a professor, a wife, a mother, a Catholic, a school volunteer, a Texas resident, and a Latinx. All of these socially defined positions constitute her status set.

Ascribed Status and Achieved Status

Statuses are distinguished by the manner in which we acquire them. An **ascribed status** is a social position conferred at birth or received involuntarily later in life, based on attributes over which the individual has little or no control, such as race/ethnicity, age, and gender. For example, Maria is a female born to Mexican American parents; she was assigned these statuses at birth. She is an adult and—if she lives long enough—will someday become an “older adult” or a “senior citizen,” which are ascribed statuses received involuntarily later in life.

An **achieved status** is a social position that a person assumes voluntarily as a result of personal choice, merit, or direct effort (■ Figure 4.2). Achieved statuses (such as occupation, education, and income) are thought to be gained as a result of personal ability or successful competition. Most occupational positions in modern societies are achieved statuses. For instance, Maria voluntarily assumed the statuses of psychologist, professor, wife, mother, and school volunteer. However, not all achieved statuses are positions most people would want to attain; for example, being a criminal, a drug addict, or a homeless person is a negative achieved status.

Ascribed statuses have a significant influence on the achieved statuses that we occupy. Race/ethnicity, gender, and age affect each person's opportunity to acquire certain achieved statuses. Those who are privileged by their positive ascribed statuses are more likely to achieve the more prestigious positions in a society. Those who are disadvantaged by their ascribed statuses may more easily acquire negative achieved statuses.

Master Status If we occupy many different statuses, how can we determine which one is the most important? Sociologist Everett Hughes has stated that societies resolve this ambiguity by determining master statuses. A **master status** is the most important status that a person occupies;



Kevin Mazur/WireImage/Getty Images

FIGURE 4.2 In the past, a person's status was primarily linked to his or her family background, education, occupation, and other sociological attributes. Today, some sociologists believe that celebrity status has overtaken the more traditional social indicators of status. Singer Taylor Swift, shown here, is an example of celebrity status.

it dominates all the individual's other statuses and is the overriding ingredient in determining a person's general social position (Hughes, 1945). Being poor or rich is a master status that influences many other areas of life, including health, education, and life opportunities (■ Figure 4.3). For men, occupation has usually been the most important status, although occupation is increasingly a master status for many women as well. “What do you do?” is one of the first questions most people ask when meeting another. Occupation provides important clues to a person's educational level, income, and family background. An individual's race/ethnicity may also constitute a master status in a society in which dominant-group members single out members of other groups as “less worthy” than themselves on the basis of real or alleged physical, cultural, or nationality characteristics.

Master statuses confer high or low levels of personal worth and dignity on people. These are not characteristics that we inherently possess; they are derived from the statuses we occupy. For those who have no residence, being a homeless

status

a socially defined position in a group or society characterized by certain expectations, rights, and duties.

status set

all the statuses that a person occupies at a given time.

ascribed status

a social position conferred at birth or received involuntarily later in life, based on attributes over which the individual has little or no control, such as race/ethnicity, age, and gender.

achieved status

a social position that a person assumes voluntarily as a result of personal choice, merit, or direct effort.

master status

the most important status that a person occupies.



David Grossman/Alamy Stock Photo



Jupiterimages/Getty Images

FIGURE 4.3 Sociologists believe that being rich or poor may be a master status in the United States. How do the lifestyles of these two people differ based on their master statuses?

person readily becomes a master status regardless of the person's other attributes. Homelessness is a stigmatized master status that confers disrepute on its occupant because domiciled people often believe that a homeless person has a "character flaw." Sometimes this assumption is supported by how the media represent homeless people. For example, media analysts may focus on the problems of one homeless family during the holidays, describing how the parents and kids live in a car and eat meals from a soup kitchen. Journalists frequently highlight the fact that many homeless adults have limited education, have spent time in prison or a mental health facility, lack a stable work history, or possess other personal problems. What is not included many times is the macro view of the situation, including what structural factors (such as lack of affordable housing in a community, high rates of unemployment, low-paying jobs that make it virtually impossible to keep up with all the bills, having been evicted one or more times, and having major unpaid medical expenses) often contribute to homelessness at local, national, and global levels.

The circumstances under which someone becomes homeless may determine the extent to which that person is stigmatized. In a now-classic study of homelessness, sociologists David A. Snow and Leon Anderson (1993: 199) observed the effects of homelessness as a master status:

It was late afternoon, and the homeless were congregated in front of [the Salvation Army shelter] for dinner. A school bus approached that was packed with Anglo junior high school students being bused from an eastside barrio school to their upper-middle and upper-class homes in the city's northwest neighborhoods. As the bus rolled by, a fusillade of

coins came flying out the windows, as the students made obscene gestures and shouted, "Get a job." Some of the homeless gestured back, some scrambled for the scattered coins—mostly pennies—others angrily threw the coins at the bus, and a few seemed oblivious to the encounter. For the passing junior high schoolers, the exchange was harmless fun, a way to work off the restless energy built up in school; but for the homeless it was a stark reminder of their stigmatized status and of the extent to which they are the objects of negative attention.

Status Symbols When people are proud of a particular social status that they occupy, they often choose to use visible means to let others know about their position. **Status symbols** are material signs that inform others of a person's specific status. For example, just as wearing a wedding ring proclaims that a person is married, for many people owning a Rolls Royce announces that they have "made it." As we saw in Chapter 2, achievement and success are core U.S. values. For this reason, people who have "made it" tend to want to display symbols to inform others of their accomplishments.

Status symbols for the domiciled and for the homeless may have different meanings. Among affluent persons, a full shopping cart in the grocery store and bags of merchandise from expensive department stores indicate a lofty financial position. By contrast, among the homeless, bulging shopping bags and overloaded grocery carts suggest a completely different status. Carts and bags are essential to street life; there is no other place to keep things, as shown by this now-classic description of Darian, a homeless woman in New York City:

The possessions in her grocery cart consist of a whole house full of things, from pots and pans to books, shoes, magazines, toilet articles, personal papers and clothing, most of which she made herself. . . .

Because of its weight and size, Darian cannot get the cart up over the curb. She keeps it in the street near the cars. This means that as she pushes it slowly up and down the street all day long, she is living almost her entire life directly in traffic. She stops off along her route to sit or sleep for a while and to be both stared at as a spectacle and to stare back. Every aspect of her life including sleeping, eating, and going to the bathroom is constantly in public view. . . . [S] he has no space to call her own and she never has a moment's privacy. Her privacy, her home, is her cart with all its possessions. (Rousseau, 1981: 141)

Although this description is about forty years old, homeless persons can still be spotted today in large urban centers, such as New York, San Francisco, and Seattle, and smaller cities, such as Waco, Texas, where they live with all of their possessions in a shopping cart and sometimes sleep on the street or in tents provided by religious or other nonprofit organizations.

For homeless women and men, possessions are not status symbols as much as they are a link with the past, a hope for the future, and a potential source of immediate cash. As Snow and Anderson (1993: 147) note, selling personal possessions is not uncommon among most social classes; members of the working and middle classes hold garage sales, and those in the upper classes have estate sales. However, when homeless persons sell their personal possessions, they do so to meet their immediate needs, not because they want to “clean house.”

Role

A **role** is a set of behavioral expectations associated with a given status. For example, a carpenter (employee) hired to remodel a kitchen is not expected to sit down uninvited and join the family (employer) for dinner. A role is the dynamic aspect of a status. Whereas we occupy a status, we play a role.

Role expectation is a group's or society's definition of the way that a specific role ought to be played. By contrast, **role performance** is how a person actually plays the role. Role performance does not always match role expectation. Some statuses have role expectations that are highly specific, such as that of surgeon or college professor. Other statuses, such as friend or significant other, have less structured expectations. The role expectations tied to the status of student are more specific than those of being a friend. Role expectations are typically based on a range of acceptable behavior rather than on strictly defined standards.

Our roles are relational (or complementary); that is, they are defined in the context of roles performed by others. We can play the role of student because someone else fulfills the role of professor. Conversely, to perform the role of professor, the teacher must have one or more students.

Role ambiguity occurs when the expectations associated with a role are unclear. For example, it is not always clear when the provider-dependent aspect of the parent-child relationship ends. Should it end at age eighteen or twenty-one? When a person is no longer in school? Different people will answer these questions differently depending on their experiences and socialization, as well as on the parents' financial capability and psychological willingness to continue contributing to the welfare of their adult children.

Role Conflict and Role Strain Most people occupy a number of statuses, each of which has numerous role expectations attached. For example, Charles is a student who attends morning classes at the university and he is an employee at a fast-food restaurant, where he works from 3:00 to 10:00 P.M. He is also Stephanie's boyfriend, and she would like to see him more often. On December 7, Charles has a final exam at 7:00 P.M., when he is supposed to be working. Meanwhile, Stephanie is pressuring him to take her to a movie. To top it off, his mother calls, asking him to fly home because his father is going to have emergency surgery. How can Charles be in all these places at once? Such experiences of role conflict can be overwhelming.

Role conflict occurs when incompatible role demands are placed on a person by two or more statuses held at the same time. When role conflict occurs, we may feel pulled in different directions. To deal with this problem, we may prioritize our roles and first complete the one we consider to be most important. Or we may compartmentalize our lives and separate our roles from one another. That is, we may perform the activities linked to one role for part of the day and then engage in the activities associated with another role in some other time period or elsewhere. For example, under routine circumstances, Charles would fulfill his student role for part of the day and his employee role for another part of the day. In his current situation, however, he is unable to compartmentalize his roles.

Role conflict may occur as a result of changing statuses and roles in society. Research has found that women who engage in behavior that is gender-typed as “masculine” tend to have higher rates of role conflict than those who

status symbols

a material sign that informs others of a person's specific status.

role

a set of behavioral expectations associated with a given status.

role expectation

a group's or society's definition of the way that a specific role ought to be played.

role performance

how a person actually plays a role.

role conflict

a situation in which incompatible role demands are placed on a person by two or more statuses held at the same time.

engage in traditional “feminine” behavior. Role conflict may sometimes be attributed not to the roles themselves but to the pressures that people feel when they do not fit into culturally prescribed roles. In a study of women athletes in college sports programs, female gymnasts and softball players faced a “female/athlete paradox,” which led them to construct images that were based on femininity on some occasions and images that were based on athleticism on other occasions. It appears that these young women had constructed their own approach for dealing with the conflict inherent in playing the female student–athlete role (Ross and Shinew, 2008).

Whereas role conflict occurs between two or more statuses, role strain takes place within one status. **Role strain** occurs when incompatible demands are built into a single status that a person occupies. For example, married or cohabitating women may experience more role strain than married or cohabitating men because many of them experience work overload, meaning that they work for wages outside the household but are also responsible for most of the parenting and household responsibilities within the family.

Recent social and economic changes in society may have increased role strain for men. In some families, men’s traditional position of dominance has eroded as more women have entered the paid labor force and, in more cases, become the primary or sole breadwinner for the family. The concepts of role expectation, role performance, role conflict, and role strain are illustrated in ■Figure 4.4.

Individuals frequently distance themselves from a role they find extremely stressful or otherwise problematic. *Role distancing* occurs when people consciously foster the impression of a lack of commitment or attachment to a particular role and merely go through the motions of role performance (Goffman, 1961b). People use distancing techniques when they do not want others to take them as the “self” implied in a particular role, especially if they think the role is “beneath them.” While Charles is working in the fast-food restaurant, for example, he does not want people to think of him as a “loser in a dead-end job.” He wants them to view him as a college student who is working there just to “pick up a few bucks” until he graduates. When customers from the university come in, Charles talks to them about what courses they are taking, what they are majoring in, and what professors they have. He does not discuss whether the bacon cheeseburger is better than the chili burger. When Charles is really involved in role distancing, he tells his friends that he “works there but wouldn’t eat there.”

Role exit occurs when people disengage from social roles that have been central to their self-identity (■Figure 4.5). Sociologist Helen Rose Fuchs Ebaugh (1988) studied this process by interviewing ex-convicts, ex-nuns, retirees, divorced men and women, and others who had exited voluntarily from significant social roles. According to Ebaugh, role exit occurs in four stages. The first stage is doubt, in which people experience frustration or burnout when they reflect on their existing roles. The second stage involves a search for alternatives; here, people may take a leave of absence from their work or temporarily separate from their marriage partner. The third stage is the turning point at which people realize that they must take some final action, such as quitting their job or getting a divorce. The fourth and final stage involves the creation of a new identity. Consider, for example, attempting to exit the “homeless” role: This is a very difficult process because the longer an individual remains on the streets, the more that person’s personal resources diminish and his or her work experience and skills become outdated and unmarketable.

Groups

Groups are another important component of social structure. To sociologists, a **social group** consists of two or more people who interact frequently and share a common identity and a feeling of interdependence. Throughout our lives,

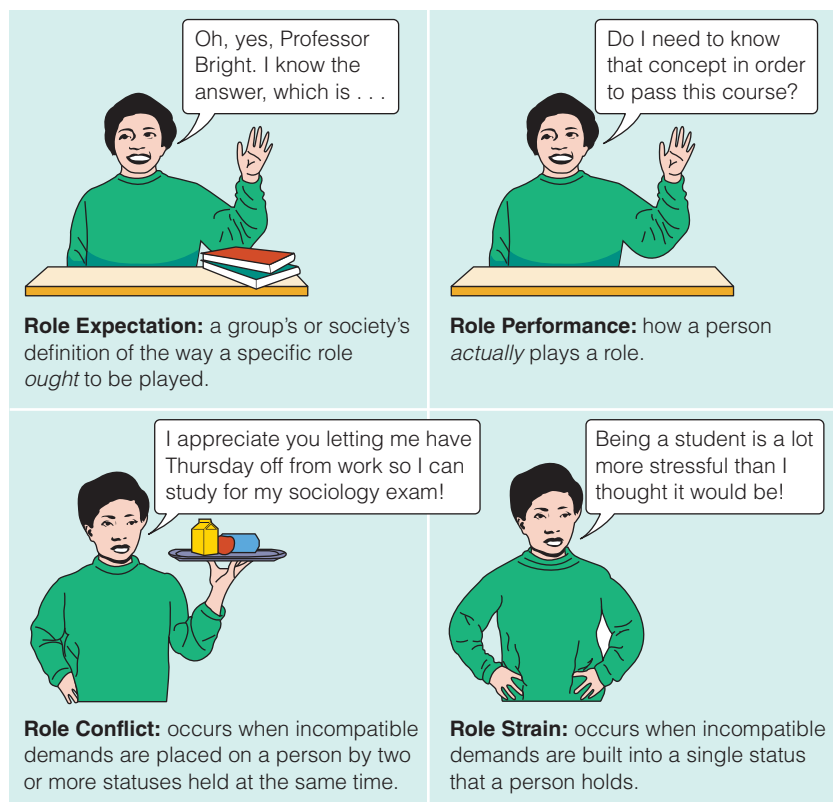


FIGURE 4.4 Role Expectation, Performance, Conflict, and Strain
When playing the role of “student,” do you sometimes personally encounter these concepts? How do you deal with such issues in your daily life?



FIGURE 4.5 *Los Angeles Times* columnist Steve Lopez met a homeless man, Nathaniel Ayers (above), and learned that he had been a promising musician studying at the Juilliard School who had dropped out because of his struggle with mental illness. In his book *The Soloist*, Lopez chronicles the relationship that he developed with Ayers and how he eventually helped get Ayers off the street and treated for his schizophrenia. This story is an example of role exit, and you can see the film version of *The Soloist* on DVD, Blu-ray, and various streaming services such as Netflix.

most of us participate in groups, from our families and childhood friends, to our college classes, to our work and community organizations, and even to society.

Primary and secondary groups are the two basic types of social groups. A **primary group** is a small, less specialized group in which members engage in face-to-face, emotion-based interactions over an extended period of time. Primary groups include our family, close friends, and school- or work-related peer groups. By contrast, a **secondary group** is a larger, more specialized group in which members engage in more impersonal, goal-oriented relationships for a limited period of time (■ Figure 4.6). Schools, churches, and corporations are examples of secondary groups. In secondary groups, people have few, if any, emotional ties to one another. Instead, they come together for some specific, practical purpose, such as getting a degree or a paycheck. Secondary groups are more specialized than primary ones; individuals relate to one another in terms of specific roles (such as professor and student) and more limited activities (such as course-related endeavors). Primary and secondary groups are discussed further in Chapter 5.

Social solidarity, or cohesion, refers to a group's ability to maintain itself in the face of obstacles. Social solidarity exists when social bonds, attractions, or other forces hold members of a group in interaction over a period of time. For example, if a local church is destroyed by fire and congregation members still worship together in a makeshift setting, then they have a high degree of social solidarity.

of the avenues for exiting the homeless role and acquiring housing are intertwined with the large-scale, secondary groups that sociologists refer to as *formal organizations*.

A **formal organization** is a highly structured group formed for the purpose of completing certain tasks or achieving specific goals. Many of us spend most of our time in formal organizations such as colleges, corporations, or the government. In Chapter 5, we

role strain

a condition that occurs when incompatible demands are built into a single status that a person occupies.

role exit

a situation in which people disengage from social roles that have been central to their self-identity.

social group

a group that consists of two or more people who interact frequently and share a common identity and a feeling of interdependence.

primary group

a small, less specialized group in which members engage in face-to-face, emotion-based interactions over an extended period of time.

secondary group

a larger, more specialized group in which members engage in more impersonal, goal-oriented relationships for a limited period of time.

formal organization

a highly structured group formed for the purpose of completing certain tasks or achieving specific goals.



Comstock/Stockbyte/Getty Images

FIGURE 4.6 For many years, powerful “old-boy” social networks have dominated capitalism. Private discussions, such as the one shown here, often close major business deals.

analyze the characteristics of bureaucratic organizations; however, at this point we should note that these organizations are a very important component of social structure in all industrialized societies. We expect such organizations to educate us, solve our social problems (such as crime and homelessness), and provide us with work opportunities.

Today, formal organizations such as the U.S. Conference of Mayors and the National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty work with groups around the country to make people aware that homelessness must be viewed within the larger context of poverty and to educate the public on the nature and extent of homelessness among various categories of people in the United States (see ■ Figure 4.7 for the latest available statistics on homelessness).

Social Institutions

At the macrolevel of all societies, certain basic activities routinely occur—children are born and socialized, goods and services are produced and distributed, order is preserved, and a sense of purpose is maintained. Social

institutions are the means by which these basic needs are met. A **social institution** is a set of organized beliefs and rules that establishes how a society will attempt to meet its basic social needs. In the past, these needs centered around five basic social institutions: the family, religion, education, the economy, and the government or politics. Today, mass media, sports, science and medicine, and the military are also considered to be social institutions.

What do you think is the difference between a group and a social institution? A group is composed of specific, identifiable people; an institution is a standardized way of doing something. The concept of “family” helps to distinguish between the two. When we talk about “your family” or “my family,” we are referring to a specific family. When we refer to the family as a social institution, we are talking about ideologies and standardized patterns of behavior that organize family life. For example, the family as a social institution contains certain statuses organized into well-defined relationships, such as husband–wife, parent–child, and brother–sister. However, specific families do not always conform to these ideologies and behavior patterns.

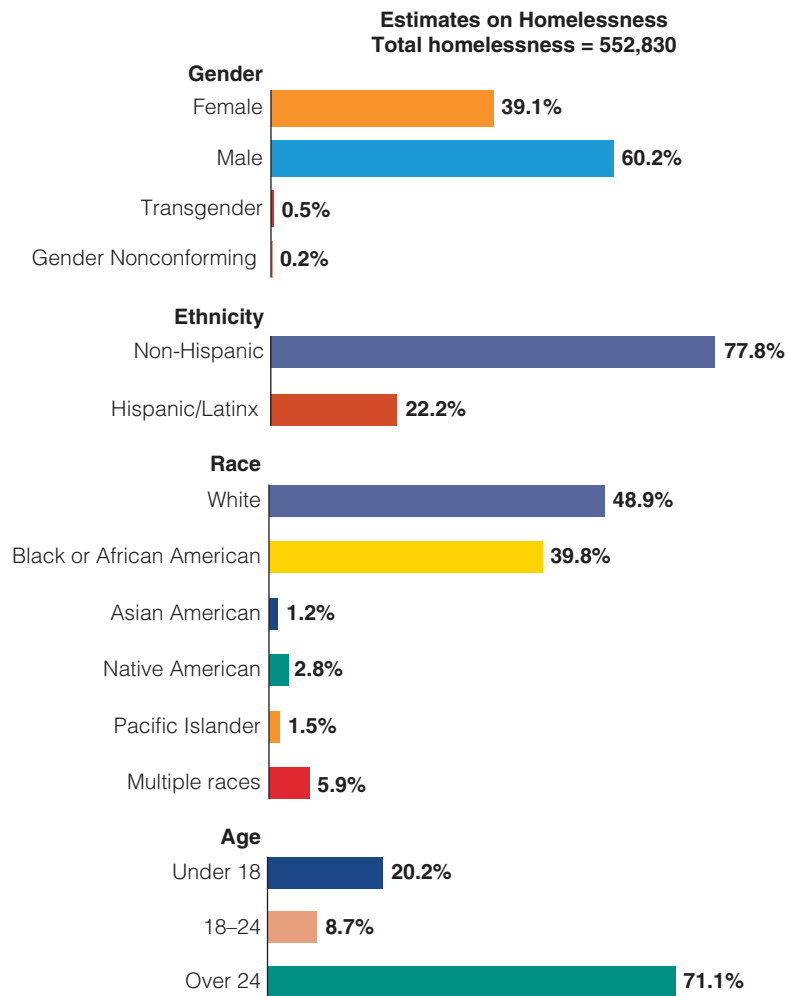


FIGURE 4.7 Who Are the Homeless?

Source: U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. 2018. "The 2018 Annual Homeless Assessment Report (AHAR) to Congress. Part 1: Point-in-Time Estimates of Homelessness (December)." Retrieved October 13, 2019. Online: <https://files.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/2018-AHAR-Part-1.pdf>.

Functionalist Views on Social Institutions Functionalist theorists emphasize that social institutions exist because they perform five essential tasks:

1. *Replacing members.* Societies and groups must have socially approved ways of replacing members who move away or die.
2. *Teaching new members.* People who are born into a society or move into it must learn the group's values and customs.
3. *Producing, distributing, and consuming goods and services.* All societies must provide and distribute goods and services for their members.
4. *Preserving order.* Every group or society must preserve order within its boundaries and protect itself from attack by outsiders.
5. *Providing and maintaining a sense of purpose.* In order to motivate people to cooperate with one another, a sense of purpose is needed.

Although this list of functional prerequisites is shared by most societies, the institutions in each society perform these tasks in somewhat different ways depending on their specific cultural values and norms.

Conflict Views on Social Institutions

Conflict theorists agree that social institutions are originally organized to meet basic social needs. However, they do not believe that social institutions work for the common good of everyone. For example, some conflict theorists might point out that families may be a source of problems (rather than solutions) for young people. Some children are abused or neglected; others have arguments with their parents or other authority figures in the household that contribute to a decision to run away from home and try their luck living on the streets. Traumatic incidents in families may trigger fear, anxiety, and dread that contribute to homelessness among young people.

Societies, Technology, and Sociocultural Change

As you and I think about persons who are homeless today, it is difficult to realize that for people in some societies, being without a place of permanent residence is a way of life. Where people live and the mode(s) of production they use to generate a food supply are related to *subsistence technology*—the methods and tools that are available for acquiring the basic needs of daily life. Social scientists have identified five types of

societies based on various levels of subsistence technology: hunting and gathering, horticultural and pastoral, agrarian, industrial, and postindustrial. These types of societies are said to have different *technoeconomic bases* related to the technology that is available and the economic structure of the society. (The features of the different types of societies, distinguished by technoeconomic base, are summarized in ■ Table 4.1.) The first three of these societies—hunting and gathering, horticultural and pastoral, and agrarian—are also referred to as preindustrial societies. According to social scientist Gerhard Lenski, societies change over time through the process of *sociocultural evolution*, the changes that occur as a society gains new technology (see Nolan and Lenski, 2015).

social institution

a set of organized beliefs and rules that establishes how a society will attempt to meet its basic social needs.

TABLE 4.1 Technoeconomic Bases of Society

	Hunting and Gathering	Horticultural and Pastoral	Agrarian	Industrial	Postindustrial
Change from Prior Society	—	Use of hand tools, such as digging stick and hoe	Use of animal-drawn plows and equipment	Invention of steam engine	Invention of computer and development of “high-tech” society
Economic Characteristics	Hunting game, gathering roots and berries	Planting crops, domesticating animals for food	Labor-intensive farming	Mechanized production of goods	Information and service economy
Control of Surplus	None	Men begin to control societies	Men own land or herds	Men own means of production	Corporate shareholders and high-tech entrepreneurs
Inheritance	None	Shared—patrilineal and matrilineal	Patrilineal	Bilateral	Bilateral
Control Over Procreation	None	Increasingly controlled by men	Men—to ensure legitimacy of heirs	Men—but less so in later stages	Mixed
Women’s Status	Relative equality	Decreasing in move to pastoralism	Low	Low	Varies by class, race, and age

Source: Adapted from Lorber, 1994: 140.

Hunting-and-Gathering Societies

From the origins of human existence (several million years ago) until about 10,000 years ago, hunting-and-gathering societies were the only type of human society that existed. *Hunting-and-gathering societies* use simple technology for

hunting animals and gathering vegetation. The technology in these societies is limited to tools and weapons that are used for basic subsistence, including spears, bows and arrows, nets, traps for hunting, and digging sticks for plant collecting. All tools and weapons are made of natural materials such as stone, bone, and wood.

In hunting-and-gathering societies, the basic social unit is the kinship group or family. People do not have private households or residences as we think of them. Instead, they live in small groups of about twenty-five to forty people. Kinship ties constitute the basic economic unit through which food is acquired and distributed. With no stable food supply, hunters and gatherers continually search for wild animals and edible plants. As a result, they remain on the move and seldom establish a permanent settlement (Nolan and Lenski, 2015).

Hunting-and-gathering societies are relatively egalitarian. Because it is impossible to accumulate a surplus of food, there are few resources upon which individuals or groups can build a power base. Some specialization (*division of labor*) occurs, primarily based on age and sex.

Young children and older people are expected to contribute what they can to securing the food supply, but healthy adults of both sexes are expected to obtain most of the food (■ Figure 4.8). In some societies, men hunt for animals and women gather plants; in others, both women and men



Ariadne Van Zandbergen/Alamy Stock Photo

FIGURE 4.8 In contemporary hunting-and-gathering societies, women contribute to the food supply by gathering plants and sometimes hunting small animals. These women of the Kalahari in Botswana gather and share edible roots.

gather plants and hunt for wild game, with women more actively participating when smaller animals are nearby.

Contemporary hunting-and-gathering societies are located in relatively isolated geographical areas. However, some analysts predict that these groups will soon cease to exist, as food producers with more dominating technologies usurp the geographic areas from which these groups have derived their food supply (Nolan and Lenski, 2015).

Horticultural and Pastoral Societies

The period between 13,000 and 7,000 BCE marked the beginning of horticultural and pastoral societies. During this period there was a gradual shift from *collecting* food to *producing* food, a change that has been attributed to three factors: (1) the depletion of the supply of large game animals as a source of food, (2) an increase in the size of the human population to feed, and (3) dramatic weather and environmental changes that probably occurred by the end of the Ice Age.

Why did some societies become horticultural while others became pastoral? Water supply, terrain, and soils are three critical factors in whether horticultural activities or pastoral activities became a society's primary mode of food production. **Pastoral societies** are based on technology that supports the domestication of large animals to provide food; these societies emerged in mountainous regions and areas with low amounts of annual rainfall. Pastoralists—people in pastoral societies—typically remain nomadic as they seek new grazing lands and water sources for their animals. **Horticultural societies** are based on technology that supports the cultivation of plants to provide food. These societies emerged in more fertile areas that were better suited for growing plants through the use of hand tools.

The family is the basic unit in horticultural and pastoral societies. Because they typically do not move as often as hunter-gatherers or pastoralists, horticulturalists establish more permanent family ties and create complex systems for tracing family lineage. Some social analysts believe that the invention of a hoe with a metal blade was a contributing factor to the less nomadic lifestyle of the horticulturalists because this made planting more efficient and productive. As a result, people became more *sedentary*, remaining settled for longer periods in the same location.

Unless there are fires, floods, droughts, or environmental problems, herding animals and farming are more reliable sources of food than hunting and gathering. When food is no longer in short supply, more infants are born and children have a greater likelihood of surviving. When people are no longer nomadic, children are viewed as an economic asset: They can cultivate crops, tend flocks, or care for younger siblings.

Division of labor increases in horticultural and pastoral societies. As the food supply grows, not everyone needs to be engaged in food production. Some pursue activities such as weaving cloth or carpets, crafting jewelry, serving as priests, or creating the tools needed for building the

society's structure. Horticultural and pastoral societies are less egalitarian than hunter-gatherers, and the idea of property rights emerges as people establish more permanent settlements. At this stage, families with the largest surpluses have an economic advantage and gain prestige and power.

In contemporary horticultural societies, women do most of the farming while men hunt game, clear land, work with arts and crafts, make tools, participate in religious and ceremonial activities, and engage in war. Gender inequality is greater in pastoral societies because men herd the large animals and women contribute relatively little to subsistence production. In some herding societies, women's primary value is their ability to produce male offspring so the family lineage is preserved and a sufficient number of males are available to protect against enemy attack.

Agrarian Societies

About five to six thousand years ago, agrarian (or agricultural) societies emerged, first in Mesopotamia and Egypt and slightly later in China (■ Figure 4.9). **Agrarian societies** use the technology of large-scale farming, including animal-drawn or energy-powered plows and equipment, to produce their food supply. Farming made it possible for people to spend their entire lives in the same location, and food surpluses made it possible for people to live in cities, where they were not directly involved in food production. The use of animals to pull plows made it possible for people to generate a large surplus of food. The land could be used more or less continuously because the plow turned the topsoil, thus returning more nutrients to the soil. In some cases, farmers could reap several harvests each year from the same plot of land.

In agrarian societies, social inequality is the highest of all preindustrial societies in terms of both class and gender. The two major classes are the landlords and the peasants. The landlords own the fields and the harvests produced by the peasants. Inheritance becomes important as families of wealthy landlords own the same land for generations. By contrast, the landless peasants enter into an agreement with the landowners to live on and cultivate a parcel of land in exchange for part of the harvest

hunting-and-gathering societies

societies that use simple technology for hunting animals and gathering vegetation.

pastoral societies

societies based on technology that supports the domestication of large animals to provide food.

horticultural societies

societies based on technology that supports the cultivation of plants to provide food.

agrarian societies

societies that use the technology of large-scale farming, including animal-drawn or energy-powered plows and equipment, to produce their food supply.



Steve Satohak/Photographer's Choice/Getty Images

FIGURE 4.9 In the twenty-first century, many people around the globe still reside in agrarian societies that are in various stages of industrialization. Open-air markets such as this one in Bali, where people barter or buy their food from one another, are a common sight in agrarian societies.

or other economic incentives. Over time, the landlords grow increasingly wealthy and powerful as they extract labor, rent, and taxation from the landless workers. Politics is based on a feudal system controlled by a political-economic elite made up of the ruler, his royal family, and members of the landowning class. Peasants have no political power and may be suppressed through the use of force or military power.

Gender-based inequality grows dramatically in agrarian societies. Men gain control over both the disposition of the food surplus and the kinship system. Because agrarian tasks require more labor and greater physical strength than horticultural ones, men become more involved in food production. Women may be excluded from these tasks because they are seen as too weak for the work or because it is believed that their childcare responsibilities are incompatible with the full-time labor that the tasks require. Today, gender inequality continues in agrarian societies; the division of labor between women and men is very distinct in areas such as parts of the Middle East. Here, women's work takes place in the private sphere (inside the home), and men's work occurs in the public sphere, providing men with more recognition and greater formal status.

Industrial Societies

Industrial societies are based on technology that mechanizes production. Originating in England during the Industrial Revolution, this mode of production dramatically transformed predominantly rural and agrarian societies into urban and industrial societies. Chapter 1 describes how the revolution first began in Britain and then spread to other countries, including the United States.

Industrialism involves the application of scientific knowledge to the technology of production, thus making it possible for machines to do the work previously done by people or animals. New technologies, such as the invention of the steam engine and fuel-powered machinery, stimulated many changes. Previously, machines were run by natural power sources (such as wind or water mills) or harnessed power (either human or animal power). The steam engine made it possible to produce goods by machines powered by fuels rather than undependable natural sources or physical labor.

As inventions and discoveries build upon one another, the rate of social and technological change increases. For example, the invention of the steam engine brought about new types of transportation, including trains and steamships. Inventions such as electric lights made it

possible for people to work around the clock without regard to whether it was daylight or dark outside. Industrialism changes the nature of subsistence production. In countries such as the United States, large-scale agribusinesses have practically replaced small, family-owned farms and ranches. However, large-scale agriculture has produced many environmental problems while providing solutions to the problem of food supply.

In industrial societies a large proportion of the population lives in or near cities. Large corporations and government bureaucracies grow in size and complexity. The nature of social life changes as people come to know one another more as statuses than as individuals. In fact, a person's occupation becomes a key defining characteristic in industrial societies, whereas his or her kinship ties are most important in preindustrial societies.

Social institutions are transformed by industrialism. The family diminishes in significance as the economy, education, and political institutions grow in size and complexity. The family is now a consumption unit, not a production unit. Although the influence of traditional religion is diminished in industrial societies, religion remains a powerful institution. Religious organizations are important in determining which moral issues will be brought to the forefront (e.g., unapproved drugs, abortion, and violence and sex in the media) and in trying to influence lawmakers to pass laws regulating people's conduct. Politics in industrial societies is usually based on a democratic form of government. As nations such as South Korea, the People's Republic of China, and Mexico have become more industrialized, many people in these nations have intensified their demands for political participation.

Although the standard of living rises in industrial societies, social inequality remains a pressing problem. As societies industrialize, the status of women tends to decline further. For example, after industrialization occurred in the United States, the division of labor between men and women in the middle and upper classes became much more distinct: Men were responsible for being “breadwinners”; women were seen as “homemakers.” This gendered division of labor increased the economic and political subordination of women. In short, industrial societies have brought about some of the greatest innovations in all of human history, but they have also maintained and perpetuated some of the greatest problems.



Sean Prior/Hemera/Getty Images

FIGURE 4.10 In postindustrial economies, the focus is often on service- and information-based jobs. Technology is the key to many occupations and professions.

Postindustrial Societies

A **postindustrial society** is one in which technology supports a service- and information-based economy. As discussed in Chapter 1, postmodern (or “postindustrial”) societies are characterized by an *information explosion* and an economy in which large numbers of people either provide or apply information (such as IT specialists) or are employed in service jobs (such as fast-food servers or health-care workers) (■ Figure 4.10). For example, banking, law, and the travel industry are characteristic forms of employment in postindustrial societies, whereas producing steel or automobiles is representative of employment in industrial societies. In fact, some analysts refer to postindustrial societies as “service economies” because many workers provide services for others. However, most of the new service occupations pay relatively low wages and offer limited opportunities for advancement.

Postindustrial societies produce knowledge that becomes a commodity. This knowledge can be leased or sold to others, or it can be used to generate goods, services, or more knowledge. In the previous types of societies we have examined, machinery or raw materials are crucial to how the economy operates. In postindustrial societies, the economy is based on involvement with people and communications technologies such as the mass media, computers, and the Internet.

Previous forms of production, including agriculture and manufacturing, do not disappear in postindustrial societies. Instead, they become more efficient through computerization and other technological innovations. Work that relies on manual labor is often shifted to less technologically advanced societies, where workers are paid low wages to produce profits for corporations based in industrial and postindustrial societies.

Knowledge is viewed as the basic source of innovation and policy formulation in postindustrial societies. As a result, formal education and other sources of information become crucial to the success of individuals and organizations. Scientific research

becomes institutionalized, and newer industries—such as computer manufacturing and software development—come into existence that would not have been possible without the new knowledge and technological strategies.

Sociological Perspectives on Stability and Change in Society

How do you think changes in social structure affect individuals, groups, and societies? These changes have a dramatic impact at all levels. Social arrangements in contemporary societies have grown more complex with the introduction of new digital technologies, changes in values and norms, and the rapidly shrinking “global village.” How do societies maintain some degree of social solidarity in the face of such changes? Sociologists Emile Durkheim and Ferdinand Tönnies developed typologies to explain the processes of stability and change in the social structure of societies. A *typology* is a classification scheme containing two or more mutually exclusive categories that are used to compare different kinds of behavior or types of societies.

Durkheim: Mechanical and Organic Solidarity

Emile Durkheim (1858/1933) was concerned with the question “How do societies manage to hold together?” According to Durkheim, social solidarity derives from a

industrial societies

societies based on technology that mechanizes production.

postindustrial society

societies in which technology supports a service- and information-based economy.

society's social structure, which, in turn, is based on the society's division of labor. *Division of labor* refers to how the various tasks of a society are divided up and performed. People in diverse societies (or in the same society at different points in time) divide their tasks somewhat differently, based on their own history, physical environment, and level of technological development. Durkheim claimed that preindustrial societies are held together by strong traditions and by the members' shared moral beliefs and values. As societies industrialized and developed more-specialized economic activities, social solidarity came to be rooted in the members' shared dependence on one another.

To explain social change, Durkheim categorized societies as having either mechanical or organic solidarity. *Mechanical solidarity* refers to the social cohesion of preindustrial societies, in which there is minimal division of labor and people feel united by shared values and common social bonds. Durkheim used the term *mechanical solidarity* because he believed that people in such preindustrial societies feel a more or less automatic sense of belonging. Social cohesion comes from the similarity of individuals who feel connected because they engage in the same kind of work and have similar education, religious beliefs, and lifestyles. Social interaction is characterized by face-to-face, intimate, primary-group relationships. Because everyone is engaged in similar work, little specialization is found in the division of labor. In societies of this kind, the focus is on the group, not on the individual, and social interaction is much more personal.

Organic solidarity refers to the social cohesion found in industrial (and perhaps postindustrial) societies, in which people perform very specialized tasks and feel united by their mutual dependence. Durkheim chose the term *organic solidarity* because he believed that individuals in industrial societies come to rely on one another in much the same way that the organs of the human body function interdependently. Social interaction is less personal, more status oriented, and more focused on specific goals and objectives. People no longer rely on morality or shared values for social solidarity; instead, they are bound together by interdependence and practical considerations.

Tönnies: *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft*

German sociologist Ferdinand Tönnies (1855–1936) used the terms *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft* to characterize the degree of social solidarity and social control found in societies. He was especially concerned about what happens to social solidarity in a society when a “loss of community” occurs.

The *Gemeinschaft* (guh-MINE-shoft) is a traditional society in which social relationships are based on personal bonds of friendship and kinship and on intergenerational stability. Tönnies (1963/1887) used the German term *Gemeinschaft* because it means “commune” or “community”; social solidarity and social control are maintained by the community. In this kind of society, relationships are

based on ascribed (from birth) status rather than achieved (acquired) status. For example, the child of a farmer is likely to become, and remain, a farmer as well. In the *Gemeinschaft*, people have a commitment to the entire group and feel a sense of togetherness. They tend to focus more on the needs and interests of the group rather than their own self-interest. Members have a strong sense of belonging, but they also have very limited privacy. External social control is seldom needed because control is maintained through informal means such as persuasion or gossip.

By contrast, the *Gesellschaft* (guh-ZELL-shoft) is a large, urban society in which social bonds are based on impersonal and specialized relationships, with little long-term commitment to the group or consensus on values. Tönnies (1963/1887) selected the German term *Gesellschaft* because it means “association”; relationships are based on achieved statuses, and interactions among people are both rational and calculated. For example, achieved status might be based on education level or the kind of work that people do rather than the family into which they were born. In such societies, most people are “strangers” who perceive that they have very little in common with most other people. Consequently, self-interest dominates, and little consensus exists regarding values. ■ Table 4.2 compares the characteristics of *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft* societies.

Social Structure and Homelessness

In *Gesellschaft* societies such as the United States, a prevailing value is that people should be able to take care of themselves. Consequently, some politicians and everyday people argue that social agencies and institutions have little or no responsibility to assist homeless persons. Others believe that the social structure of societies should provide a safety net for all people regardless of their economic status.

TABLE 4.2 Comparing *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft* Societies

<i>Gemeinschaft</i>	<i>Gesellschaft</i>
Characterized by rural life	Characterized by urban life
Sense of community based on similarity	Lack of feeling of community
Intimate, face-to-face social interactions	Impersonal and task-oriented relationships
Primary focus on personal relationships	Primary focus on tasks or goals to be accomplished
Informal social control	Formal social control
Ascribed statuses most important	Achieved statuses most important
Limited social change	Social change more prevalent



FIGURE 4.11 How do our expectations of social interaction affect how we behave in situations where we do not know anyone else? Do we tend to stand nearby or keep our distance? Are we willing to make eye contact with others? Where would you stand if you were in the group shown above?

Clearly, there is no simple answer to questions about what should be done to help homeless persons. Nor, as you will notice in this chapter's "Sociology and Social Policy" box, is there any consensus on what rights the homeless have to occupy public spaces such as parks and city sidewalks. The answers we derive as a society and as individuals are often based on our social construction of the reality of life for the homeless.

Social Interaction: The Microlevel Perspective

So far in this chapter, we have focused on society and social structure from a macrolevel perspective, seeing how the structure of society affects the statuses we occupy, the roles we play, and the groups and organizations to which we belong. Functionalist and conflict perspectives provide a macrosociological overview because they concentrate on large-scale events and broad social features. By contrast, the symbolic interactionist perspective takes a microsocio-logical approach, asking how social institutions affect our daily lives.

Social Interaction and Meaning

When you are with other people, do you often wonder what they think of you? If so, you are not alone! Because most of us are concerned about the meanings that others ascribe to our

division of labor

how the various tasks of a society are divided up and performed.

mechanical solidarity

Emile Durkheim's term for the social cohesion of preindustrial societies, in which there is minimal division of labor and people feel united by shared values and common social bonds.

organic solidarity

Emile Durkheim's term for the social cohesion found in industrial (and perhaps postindustrial) societies, in which people perform very specialized tasks and feel united by their mutual dependence.

Gemeinschaft

a traditional society in which social relationships are based on personal bonds of friendship and kinship and on intergenerational stability.

Gesellschaft

a large, urban society in which social bonds are based on impersonal and specialized relationships, with little long-term commitment to the group or consensus on values.

What's Going on in "Paradise"?—Homeless Rights versus Public Space

Police officers came up to me and said it looks much better. Residents who live there came up to me and said, "Mayor, what are you doing? It looks so much better."

—MAYOR KIRK CALDWELL of Honolulu, Hawaii, comments on efforts to remove homeless persons and their belongings from Waikiki, a beachfront neighborhood that is a favorite destination of tourists worldwide (qtd. in Grube, 2014) (Mayor Caldwell remained in his position as of this writing in 2019.)

It's a totally different experience. It's a totally different life. It's hard to be excluded from society so fast, and the people that work for the city and state that used to work for us now work against us. . . . My daughter is three years old today and if this bill passes, you're going to label her as a criminal because she sleeps on the sidewalk? You know we have no place to go. . . . Each sweep that happens actually paralyzes us, pushes us back ten steps out of the five steps we move forward.

—TABATHA MARTIN explains what life has been like on the streets since her husband lost his job after a heart attack and stated her concern about a new homeless ordinance (that was not passed). After this news story was aired, Kathryn Xian, an activist and soap maker in Honolulu, helped Tabatha's family find housing and a job. (Cave, 2015; KITV.com, 2014)

In Honolulu, like many other cities, a pitched battle has continued for years, and is still going on in



Sidewalk clearance and public space protection are controversial topics in cities where law enforcement officials have been instructed to remove homeless individuals and their possessions from public spaces. What are the central issues in this social policy debate? Why should this problem be of concern to each of us?

the 2010s and 2020s, between persons without permanent residences and law enforcement officials and community leaders who believe they must "take back the streets" to save their community and the local tourism industry.

behavior, we try to interpret their words and actions so that we can plan how we will react toward them (Blumer, 1969). We know that others have expectations of us. We also have certain expectations about them. For example, if we enter an elevator that has only one other person in it, we do not expect that individual to confront us and stare into our eyes. As a matter of fact, we would be quite upset if the person did so.

Social interaction within a given society has certain shared meanings across situations (■ Figure 4.11). For instance, our reaction would be the same regardless of *which* elevator we rode in *which* building. Sociologist Erving Goffman (1961b) described these shared meanings in his observation about two pedestrians approaching each other on a public sidewalk. He noted that each will tend to look at the other just long enough to acknowledge the other's presence. By the time they are about eight feet away from

each other, both individuals will tend to look downward. Goffman referred to this behavior as *civil inattention*—the ways in which an individual shows awareness that another is present without making this person the object of particular attention. The fact that people engage in civil inattention demonstrates that interaction does have a pattern, or *interaction order*, that regulates the form and processes (but not the content) of social interaction.

Does everyone interpret social interaction rituals in the same way? No. Race/ethnicity, gender, and social class play a part in the meanings we give to our interactions with others, including chance encounters on elevators or on the street. Our perceptions about the meaning of a situation vary widely based on the statuses we occupy and our unique personal experiences. For example, women often do not perceive street encounters to be "routine" rituals. They

"Public space protection" has increasingly become an issue as record numbers of homeless individuals and families seek refuge in public places because they have nowhere else to go or do not wish to sleep in homeless shelters, if they are available. However, the seemingly individualistic problem of not having a home is actually linked to larger social concerns, including long-term unemployment, lack of education and affordable housing, cutbacks in government and social service budgets, and the physical and mental conditions of military veterans, such as those who suffer from posttraumatic stress disorder.

The problem of homelessness raises significant social policy issues, such as the extent to which cities can make it illegal for people to remain for extended periods of time in public spaces, use public restrooms at all hours, or sleep in motor vehicles. Should homeless people be allowed to sleep on sidewalks, in parks, and in other public areas? As cities have sought to improve their downtown areas and public spaces, they have taken measures to enforce city ordinances controlling loitering (standing around or sleeping in public spaces), "aggressive panhandling," and disorderly conduct. Advocates for the homeless and civil liberties groups have filed lawsuits claiming that the rights of the homeless are being violated by the enforcement of these laws. The lawsuits assert that the homeless have a right to sleep in parks because no affordable housing is available for them. Advocates also argue that panhandling is a legitimate means of livelihood for some of the homeless and is protected speech under the U.S. Constitution's First Amendment. In addition, they accuse public and law enforcement officials of seeking

to punish the homeless on the basis of their "status," a cruel and unusual punishment prohibited by the Eighth Amendment.

The "homeless problem" is not a new one for city governments. Of the limited public funding that is designated for the homeless, most has been spent on shelters that are frequently overcrowded and otherwise inadequate. Officials in some cities, including Honolulu, have given homeless people a one-way ticket to another city or back to the mainland. Still others have routinely run them out of public spaces or tried to relocate them to marginalized areas of the city.

What responsibility do you think society should have for persons who are homeless? Are laws restricting the hours that public areas or parks are open to the public unfair to homeless persons? These questions highlight pressing social policy concerns because affordable housing and job opportunities are not available for many people, often leaving persons who are homeless with nowhere to go.

Reflect & Analyze

Do you think it is possible for communities to maintain public safety for everyone and not criminalize persons who are homeless? How does your city deal with the issue of homeless rights and public space? What do you think should be done?

Sources: Based on Grube, 2014; Nakaso, 2019; National Coalition for the Homeless, 2015.

fear for their personal safety and try to avoid comments and propositions that are sexual in nature. African Americans may also feel uncomfortable in street encounters. A middle-class African American college student described his experiences walking home at night from a campus job:

So, even if you wanted to, it's difficult just to live a life where you don't come into conflict with others. . . . Every day that you live as a black person you're reminded how you're perceived in society. You walk the streets at night; white people cross the streets. I've seen white couples and individuals dart in front of cars to not be on the same side of the street. Just the other day, I was walking down the street, and this white female with a child, I saw her pass a young white male about 20 yards ahead. When she saw

me, she quickly dragged the child and herself across the busy street. . . . [When I pass,] white men tighten their grip on their women. I've seen people turn around and seem like they're going to take blows from me. . . . So, every day you realize [you're black]. Even though you're not doing anything wrong; you're just existing. You're just a person. But you're a black person perceived in an unblack world. (qtd. in Feagin, 1991: 111–112)

Although this statement was made about thirty years ago, some current students of color reading it can still relate to the experiences described here. As this passage indicates, social encounters have different meanings for men and women, whites and people of color, individuals from different social classes, and sometimes people

from different areas of the country. Members of the dominant classes regard the poor, unemployed, and working class as less worthy of attention, frequently subjecting them to subtle yet systematic “attention deprivation” (Derber, 1983). The same can certainly be said about how members of the dominant classes “interact” with the homeless. There are some who say that all of this has changed since the time that some of this research was originally conducted, but, unfortunately, violent incidents are periodically reported in the media that renew the concerns of people that we have a long way to go in protecting the safety and security of all individuals in our nation.

Social Construction of Reality

If we interpret other people’s actions so subjectively, can we have a shared social reality? Some symbolic interaction theorists believe that there is very little shared reality beyond that which is socially created. Symbolic interactionists refer to this as the *social construction of reality*—the process by which our perception of reality is largely shaped by the subjective meaning that we give to an experience (Berger and Luckmann, 1967). This meaning strongly influences what we “see” and how we respond to situations.

As we discussed previously, our perceptions and behavior are influenced by how we initially define situations: We act on reality as we see it. Sociologists describe this process as the *definition of the situation*, meaning that we analyze a social context in which we find ourselves, determine what is in our best interest, and adjust our attitudes and actions accordingly. This process can result in a *self-fulfilling prophecy*—a false belief or prediction that produces behavior that makes the originally false belief come true (Merton, 1968). An example would be a person who has been told repeatedly that she or he is not a good student; eventually, this person might come to believe it to be true, stop studying, and receive failing grades. Dominant-group members with prestigious statuses may have the ability to establish how other people define “reality” (Berger and Luckmann, 1967: 109).

An example of the self-fulfilling prophecy is a study of homeless persons in the United Kingdom. Extensive interviews were conducted with eight homeless individuals to learn about their experiences with health-related social services. When the study was conducted, early in this century, approximately 400,000 people were considered to be “hidden homeless” in the United Kingdom, or approximately more than two in every thousand people in that nation. According to the researchers, homeless people were trapped between the *homed* system—the social service system, which offered formal help but was quick to label and stigmatize them, while enforcing extensive rules regarding their activities—and the *homeless* system of informal help, where other homeless individuals were supportive but often intensified their problems by offering alcohol, drugs, or

other “solutions” that did not help their overall situation. The researchers concluded that a self-fulfilling prophecy occurs when homeless persons who have been labeled as “sofa surfers,” “homeless,” or similar terms come to view the label as central to how they see themselves and then decide to embed themselves within the homeless system, where they can have the support of other homeless people who also live without establishment-ordered rules and routines (Ogden and Avades, 2011). From the choices these individuals made, the self-fulfilling prophecy became a reality because their homeless situation was unchanged, and social organizations and institutions within the community were unable to meet their needs.

Ethnomethodology

How do we know how to interact in a given situation? What rules do we follow? Ethnomethodologists are interested in the answers to these questions. *Ethnomethodology* is the study of the commonsense knowledge that people use to understand the situations in which they find themselves (Heritage, 1984: 4). Sociologist Harold Garfinkel (1967) initiated this approach and coined the term: *ethno* for “people” or “folk” and *methodology* for a “system of methods.” Garfinkel was critical of mainstream sociology for not recognizing the ongoing ways in which people create reality and produce their own world. Consequently, ethnomethodologists examine existing patterns of conventional behavior in order to uncover people’s background expectancies—that is, their shared interpretation of objects and events, as well as their resulting actions. According to ethnomethodologists, interaction is based on assumptions of shared expectancies. For example, when you are talking with someone, what expectations do you have that you will take turns? Based on your background expectancies, would you be surprised if the other person talked for an hour and never gave you a chance to speak?

To uncover people’s background expectancies, ethnomethodologists frequently break “rules” or act as though they do not understand some basic rule of social life so that they can observe other people’s responses. In a series of *breaching experiments*, Garfinkel assigned different activities to his students to see how breaking the unspoken rules of behavior created confusion.

The ethnomethodological approach contributes to our knowledge of social interaction by making us aware of subconscious social realities in our daily lives. However, a number of sociologists regard ethnomethodology as a frivolous approach to studying human behavior because it does not examine the impact of macrolevel social institutions—such as the economy and education—on people’s expectancies. Some scholars suggest that ethnomethodologists fail to do what they claim to do: look at how social realities are created. Rather, they take ascribed statuses (such as race, class, gender, and age) as “givens,” not as *socially created* realities.

Dramaturgical Analysis

Can you compare everyday life to watching a dramatic presentation? Erving Goffman suggested that day-to-day interactions have much in common with being on stage or in a dramatic production. **Dramaturgical analysis** is the study of social interaction that compares everyday life to a theatrical presentation. In this presentation, there is a stage, actors, and an audience to observe and analyze the social interactions of the actors. The actors have a **social script**—a playbook that the actors use to guide their verbal replies and overall performance to achieve the desired goal of the conversation or fulfill the role they are playing. Although most of us do not have scripted conversations, we have a good idea about how a social exchange will occur. For example, when someone asks us how we are doing, we expect to reply, “Fine, thanks.” If we take our vehicle to the drive-up order station at a fast-food restaurant, we expect to hear a voice say, “May I take your order, please?” We do not expect to reply, “Do you know what the high temperature will be today?”

Because we are familiar with most scripts in our daily lives, we know what to expect; however, there is often more than one way to interpret a script, leading to confusion and sometimes to conflict. According to Goffman (1959, 1963a), members of our “audience” judge our performance and are aware that we may slip and reveal our true character. Consequently, most of us attempt to play our role as well as possible and to create and sustain favorable impressions. **Impression management (presentation of self)** refers to people’s efforts to present themselves to others in ways that are most favorable to their own interests or image (■ Figure 4.12). For example, suppose that a professor has returned graded exams to your class. Will you discuss the exam and your grade with others in the class? If you are like most people, you probably play your student role differently depending on whom you are talking to and what grade you received on the exam. Your “presentation” may vary depending on the grade earned by the other person (your “audience”). In one study, students who all received high grades (“Ace–Ace encounters”) willingly talked with one another about their grades and sometimes engaged in a little bragging about how they had “aced” the test. However, encounters between students who had received high grades and those who had received low or failing grades (“Ace–Bomber encounters”) were uncomfortable. The Aces felt as if they had to minimize their own grade. Consequently, they tended to attribute their success to “luck” and were quick to offer the Bombers words of encouragement. On the other hand, the Bombers believed that they had to praise the Aces and hide their own feelings of frustration and disappointment. Students who received low or failing grades (“Bomber–Bomber encounters”) were more comfortable when they talked with one another because they could share their negative emotions. They often

indulged in self-pity and relied on face-saving excuses (such as an illness or an unfair exam) for their poor performances (Albas and Albas, 1988, 2011).

In Goffman’s terminology, **face-saving behavior** refers to the strategies we use to rescue our performance when we experience a potential or actual loss of face. When the Bombers made excuses for their low scores, they were engaged in face-saving; the Aces attempted to help them save face by asserting that the test was unfair or that it was only a small part of the final grade. Why would the Aces and Bombers both participate in face-saving behavior? In most social interactions, all role players have an interest in keeping the “play” going so that they can maintain their overall definition of the situation in which they perform their roles.

Goffman noted that people consciously participate in **studied nonobservance**, a face-saving technique in which one role player ignores the flaws in another’s performance to avoid embarrassment for everyone involved. Most of us remember times when we have failed in our role and know that it is likely to happen again; thus, we may be more forgiving of the role failures of others.

Social interaction, like a theater, has a front stage and a back stage. The **front stage** is the area where a player performs a specific role before an audience. The **back stage** is the area where a player is not required to perform a specific role because it is out of view of a given audience. For example, when the Aces and Bombers were talking with one another at school, they were on the “front stage.” When they were in the privacy of their own residences, they were in “back stage” settings—they no longer had to perform the Ace and Bomber roles and could be themselves.

social construction of reality

the process by which our perception of reality is largely shaped by the subjective meaning that we give to an experience.

self-fulfilling prophecy

a situation in which a false belief or prediction produces behavior that makes the originally false belief come true.

ethnomethodology

the study of the commonsense knowledge that people use to understand the situations in which they find themselves.

dramaturgical analysis

Erving Goffman’s term for the study of social interaction that compares everyday life to a theatrical presentation.

social script

a “playbook” that “actors” use to guide their verbal replies and overall performance to achieve the desired goal of the conversation or fulfill the role they are playing.

impression management (presentation of self)

Erving Goffman’s term for people’s efforts to present themselves to others in ways that are most favorable to their own interests or image.

face-saving behavior

Erving Goffman’s term for the strategies we use to rescue our performance when we experience a potential or actual loss of face.



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FIGURE 4.12 Sociologist Erving Goffman believed that people spend a great amount of time and effort managing the impression that they present. What kinds of impressions are these men presenting to others?

The need for impression management is most intense when role players have widely divergent or devalued statuses. As we have seen with the Aces and Bombers, the participants often play different roles under different circumstances and keep their various audiences separated from one another. If one audience becomes aware of other roles that a person plays, the impression being given at that time may be ruined. For example, people facing or experiencing homelessness are not only stigmatized but may also find that they lose the opportunity to get a job if their homelessness becomes known. However, many homeless individuals do not passively accept the roles into which they are cast. For the most part, they attempt—as we all do—to engage in impression management in their everyday lives.

The dramaturgical approach helps us think about the roles we play and the audiences who judge our presentation of self; however, this perspective has also been criticized for focusing on appearances and not the underlying substance. This approach may not place enough emphasis on the ways in which our everyday interactions with other people are influenced by occurrences within the larger society. For example, if some political leaders or social elites in a

community deride homeless people by saying they are “lazy” or “unwilling to work,” it may become easier for everyday people walking down a street to treat homeless individuals poorly. Overall, however, Goffman’s dramaturgical analysis has been highly influential in the development of the sociology of emotions, an important area of contemporary theory and research.

The Sociology of Emotions

Why do we laugh, cry, or become angry? Are these emotional expressions biological or social in nature? To some extent, emotions are a biologically given sense (like hearing, smell, and touch), but they are also social in origin. We are socialized to feel certain emotions, and we learn how and when to express (or not express) those emotions (Hochschild, 1983).

How do we know which emotions are appropriate for a given role? Sociologist Arlie Hochschild (1983) suggests that we acquire a set of *feeling rules* that shapes the appropriate emotions for a given role or specific situation (■ Figure 4.13). These rules include how, where, when, and with whom an emotion should be expressed. For example,



Tom Prettyman/PhotoEdit



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FIGURE 4.13 Are there different gender-based expectations in the United States about the kinds of emotions that men, as compared with women, are supposed to show? What feeling rules shape the emotions of the individuals shown in these two photos?

for the role of a mourner at a funeral, feeling rules tell us which emotions are required (sadness and grief, for example), which are acceptable (a sense of relief that the deceased no longer has to suffer), and which are unacceptable (enjoyment of the occasion expressed by laughing out loud) (see Hochschild, 1983: 63–68).

Feeling rules also apply to our occupational roles. For example, the truck driver who handles explosive cargos must be able to suppress fear. Although all jobs place some burden on our feelings, *emotional labor* occurs only in jobs that require personal contact with the public or the production of a state of mind (such as hope, desire, or fear) in others (Hochschild, 1983). With emotional labor, employees must display only certain carefully selected emotions. For example, flight attendants are required to act friendly toward passengers, to be helpful and open to requests, and to maintain an “omnipresent smile” in order to enhance the customers’ status. By contrast, bill collectors are encouraged to show anger and make threats to customers, thereby supposedly deflating the customers’ status and wearing down their presumed resistance to paying past-due bills. In both jobs the

employees are expected to show feelings that are often not their true ones (Hochschild, 1983).

Social class and race are determinants in managed expression and emotion management. Emotional labor is emphasized in middle- and upper-class families. Because middle- and upper-class parents often work with people, they are more likely to teach their children the importance of emotional labor in their own careers than are working-class parents, who tend to work with things, not people (Hochschild, 1983). Race is also an important factor in emotional labor. People of color spend much of their life engaged in emotional labor because racist attitudes and discrimination make it continually necessary to manage one’s feelings.

Emotional labor may produce feelings of estrangement from one’s “true” self. C. Wright Mills (1956) suggested that when we “sell our personality” in the course of selling goods or services, we engage in a seriously self-alienating process. In other words, the “commercialization” of our feelings may dehumanize our work-role performance and create alienation and contempt that spill over into other aspects of our life.



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Doglikehorse/Shutterstock.com



Krzysztof Wyslowski/ATP/Getty Images

FIGURE 4.14 Nonverbal communication may be thought of as an international language. What message do you receive from the facial expression, body position, and gestures of each of these people? Is it possible to misinterpret these messages?

Hochschild (2012) also conducted research to demonstrate how many middle- and upper-income individuals outsource emotional labor in the more intimate aspects of their lives, such as having other people professionally plan their family birthday parties and weddings, select names for their children, oversee the daily lives of their children, and assume major caregiving responsibilities for their elderly parents. Hochschild uses the term the “outsourced self” to refer to what happens when individuals defer most of their emotional labor to others, particularly as the market continues to invade private life.

Nonverbal Communication

In a typical stage drama, the players not only speak their lines but also use nonverbal communication to convey information. *Nonverbal communication* is the transfer of information between

persons without the use of words (■Figure 4.14). It includes not only visual cues (gestures, appearances) but also vocal features (inflection, volume, pitch) and environmental factors (use of space, position) that affect meanings. Facial expressions, head movements, body positions, and other gestures carry as much of the total meaning of our communication with others as our spoken words do.

Functions of Nonverbal Communication We obtain first impressions of others from various kinds of nonverbal communication, such as the clothing they wear and their body positions. Head and facial movements may provide us with information about other people’s emotional states, and others receive similar information from us. Through our body posture and eye contact, we signal that we do or do not wish to speak to someone. For example, we may look down at

the sidewalk or off into the distance when we pass homeless persons who look as if they are going to ask for money.

Nonverbal communication establishes the relationship among people in terms of their responsiveness to and power over one another. For example, we show that we are responsive toward or like another person by maintaining eye contact and attentive body posture and perhaps by touching and standing close. Studies of communication in the doctor–patient relationship confirm that trust is vital for quality health-care outcomes and that the best communications are established through actions more than words. Nonverbal communication, such as good eye contact and attentive listening posture, shows that the doctor is paying attention to what the patient is saying, and this helps to build rapport and establish the agenda of the professional in relation to that of the patient (Brown et al., 2011).

Goffman (1956) suggested that *demeanor* (how we behave or conduct ourselves) is relative to social power. People in positions of dominance are allowed a wider range of permissible actions than are their subordinates, who are expected to show deference. *Deference* is the symbolic means by which subordinates give a required permissive response to those in power; it confirms the existence of inequality and reaffirms each person’s relationship to the other.

Facial Expression, Eye Contact, and Touching Deference behavior is important in regard to facial expression, eye contact, and touching. This type of nonverbal communication is symbolic of our relationships with others. Who smiles? Who stares? Who makes and sustains eye contact? Who touches whom? All these questions relate to demeanor and deference; the key issue is the status of the person who is doing the smiling, staring, or touching relative to the status of the recipient (Goffman, 1967).

Facial expressions, especially smiles and eye contact, also reflect gender-based patterns of dominance and subordination in society. Typically, women have been socialized to smile and frequently do so even when they are not actually happy (LaFrance and Hecht, 2000). Jobs held predominantly by women (including flight attendant, secretary and administrative assistant, elementary schoolteacher, and nurse) are more closely associated with being pleasant and smiling than are occupations traditionally defined as “men’s work.” By contrast, men tend to display less emotion through smiles or other facial expressions and instead seek to show that they are reserved and in control. Even as women have entered previously male-dominated professions, such as medicine, law, and college teaching and administration, some expectation that they will be more personable, more understanding, and more nurturing than their male counterparts has remained in the minds of some patients, clients, customers, colleagues, students, supervisors, and others who come into daily contact with the female professional.

Women are also more likely to sustain eye contact during conversations (but not otherwise) as a means of showing their interest in and involvement with others. By contrast, men are less likely to maintain prolonged eye contact during conversations but are more likely to stare at other people (especially men) in order to challenge them and assert their own status (Hall, Carter, and Horgan, 2000).

Eye contact can be a sign of domination or deference. For example, in a classic participant observation study of domestic (household) workers and their employers, sociologist Judith Rollins (1985) found that household workers were supposed to show deference by averting their eyes when they talked to their employers. Deference also required that they present an “exaggeratedly subservient demeanor” by standing less erect and walking tentatively. This kind of behavior is depicted in the best-selling book and movie *The Help*. More recent relationships of domination and deference in household relationships among immigrant workers and their affluent employers in the United States are discussed in the research of sociologist Pierrette Hondagneu-Sotelo (2007). Other contemporary examples of using eye contact as a means to express domination and deference are when a teacher or principal is correcting a student and when a detainee is in a juvenile facility or prison.

Touching is another form of nonverbal behavior that has many different shades of meaning. Although touching is a universal aspect of people’s communication with one another, it varies greatly by gender, age, and culture. Gender and power differences are evident in tactile communication from birth: Boys are touched more roughly and playfully, whereas girls are handled more gently and protectively. This pattern continues into adulthood, with women touched more frequently than men. Clearly, touching has a different meaning to women than to men. Women may hug and touch others to indicate affection and emotional support, but men are more likely to touch others to give directions, assert power, and express sexual interest.

Age is also a factor in touching: Different patterns of touching have been identified in people under thirty years of age as compared with those of older adults. Younger men behave more possessively and women more submissively in regard to touching behavior. Touching behavior also involves large cultural differences in personal space, such as the handshake as a preferred means of personal greeting in the United States as compared to extensive hugs and kisses in some other countries. Let’s look more closely at personal space.

nonverbal communication

the transfer of information between persons without the use of words.

personal space

the immediate area surrounding a person that the person claims as private.

YOU CAN **Make a Difference**

Offering a Helping Hand to Persons Who Are Homeless

When you pull up at an intersection and see a person holding a piece of cardboard with a handwritten sign on it, how do you react? Many of us shy away from encounters such as this because we know, without actually looking, that the sign says something like “Homeless, please help.” In an attempt to avoid eye contact with the person, we suddenly look with newfound interest at something lying on our car seat, or we check our appearance in the rearview mirror, or we adjust the radio. In fact, we do just about whatever it takes to divert our attention, making eye contact with this person impossible until the traffic light changes and we can be on our way.

Does this scenario sound familiar? Many of us see homeless individuals on street corners and elsewhere as we go about our daily routine. We are uncomfortable in their presence because we don’t know what we can do to help them, or even if we should. Frequently, we hear media reports stating that some allegedly homeless people abuse the practice of asking for money on the streets and that many are faking injury or poverty so that they can take advantage of generous individuals. Stereotypes such as this are commonplace, but they are far from the entire picture: Many homeless people are in need of assistance, and many of the homeless are children, persons with disabilities, and people with other problems that make it difficult, if not impossible, for them to earn enough money to pay for housing.

Do all of these “big-picture” problems in our society mean that we have no individual responsibility to help homeless people? We do not necessarily have to hand money over to the person on the street to help individuals who are homeless. There are other, and perhaps even better, ways in which we can provide help to the homeless through our small acts of generosity and kindness. Here are a few ways in which you and others at your school might help homeless individuals and families in your community:

- *Understand who the homeless are* so that you can help dispel the stereotypes often associated with homeless people. Learn what causes homelessness and remember that each person’s story is unique.
- *Buy a street newspaper sold by homeless people* if you live in an urban area (such as Chicago, Washington, D.C., San Francisco, Nashville, or Seattle) where these newspapers are sold. Over 40 “street newspapers” existed at the time of this writing in 2019. Homeless people receive a small amount for every paper they sell (nationalhomeless.org, 2018).
- *Give to organizations that aid the homeless.* In addition to money and clothing, recyclable cans and bottles

are helpful because they can help pay for living expenses.

- *Volunteer at a shelter, soup kitchen, or battered women’s shelter* where you can help meet the needs of homeless people as well as women and children who need assistance in getting away from abusive relationships.
- *Look for campus organizations that work with the homeless* or create your own and enlist friends and existing organizations (such as your service organization, sorority, or fraternity) to engage in community service projects.

For additional ways you can help the homeless, check with shelters in your area. You may also want to visit the websites of organizations such as the following:

- Just Give
- The Doe Fund
- U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
- nationalhomeless.org



McClatchy/Tribune Content Agency LLC/Alamy Stock Photo

An example of “paying it forward” for homeless persons is Rosa’s Fresh Pizza in Center City Philadelphia, where customers can pay extra to buy slices for homeless persons who come into the store throughout the day. Owner Mason Wartman (shown here) keeps track of these purchases, and people place notes of encouragement or thanks on the walls.

Personal Space *Personal space* is the immediate area surrounding a person that he or she claims as private. Our personal space is contained within an invisible boundary surrounding our body, much like a snail's shell or an invisible bubble or zone around a person. This space fluctuates, and it is part of a communication style. When others invade our space, we may retreat, stand our ground, or even lash out, depending on our cultural background.

Anthropologist Edward Hall (1959, 1966) first described the concept of personal space and identified four dimensions of this space among people in the United States: *Intimate distance* (or *intimate zone*) involves a high level of intimacy between two persons, including touching; *personal distance* (or *personal zone*) is the distance between two persons who know each other with a relative intimacy, such as friends, brothers, sisters, or other relatives; and *social distance* (or *social zone*) is the more impersonal form of communication or business interaction that takes place among individuals at a social gathering or employees in a business environment. The fourth dimension is *public distance* (or *public zone*), in which no intimacy exists, for example, between a speaker on a platform and an audience separated by a distance that is greater than thirteen feet and may be as much as twenty-seven or more feet.

Age, gender, and cultural differences are important factors in the allocation of personal space. With regard to age, adults generally do not hesitate to enter the personal space of a child. Women in the United States tend to interact at closer distances than men, and this appears to remain relatively consistent across age categories. Cross-cultural studies have confirmed that people in the United States are more comfortable with larger zones of personal space than are individuals from Latin American countries. According to some social analysts, less personal space is also required among South Americans, southern and eastern Europeans, and Arabs, whereas larger amounts of personal space are required among Asians and northern Europeans (Beaulieu, 2004). ■ Figure 4.15 illustrates differences in social distance rules between two contrasting cultures, North American and Latin American.

In sum, all forms of nonverbal communication are influenced by gender, race, social class, and the personal contexts in which they occur. Although it is difficult to generalize about people's nonverbal behavior, we still need to think about our own nonverbal communication patterns. Recognizing that differences in social interaction exist is important. Learning to understand and respect alternative styles of social interaction enhances our personal effectiveness by increasing the range of options we have for communicating with different people in diverse contexts and for varied reasons. (The Concept Quick Review summarizes the microlevel approach to social interaction.)

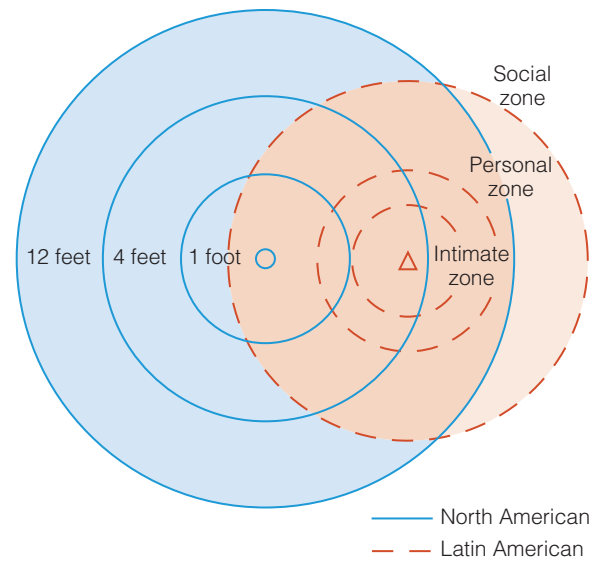


FIGURE 4.15 North American and Latin American Social Distance Rules

Source: Based on *Cultural Anthropology* by Paul Hiebert.

Looking Ahead: Social Change, Social Structure, and Interaction in the Future

The social structure in the United States has been changing rapidly in recent decades, and we can no longer think of our future as separate from the larger world of which we are a part. Currently, there are more possible statuses for persons to occupy and roles to play than at any other time in history. Although achieved statuses are considered very important, ascribed statuses still have a significant effect on people's options and opportunities. National issues are now fused with global concerns regarding economic crises, actual and potential war and terrorism, more frequent occurrences of natural disasters, and other problems that affect people around the world.

Ironically, at a time when we have more ability to communicate than ever before, more technological capability, more leisure activities and types of entertainment, and more quantities of material goods available for consumption, many people experience problems that are beyond their individual ability to resolve, such as chronic unemployment, hunger, and homelessness (see the "You Can Make a Difference" box). As the sociological imagination suggests, these individuals in need are dealing not only with their own personal troubles but also with broader public issues that affect large numbers of people and require solutions at community, societal, and global levels. The future of our country rests on our collective ability to deal with major social problems at both the macrolevel and the microlevel of the social world.

CONCEPT QUICK REVIEW

Social Interaction: The Microlevel Perspective

Social interaction and meaning	In a given society, forms of social interaction have shared meanings, although these may vary to some extent based on race/ethnicity, gender, and social class.
Social construction of reality	The process by which our perception of reality is largely shaped by the subjective meaning that we give to an experience.
Ethnomethodology	Studying the commonsense knowledge that people use to understand the situations in which they find themselves makes us aware of subconscious social realities in daily life.
Dramaturgical analysis	The study of social interaction that compares everyday life to a theatrical presentation. This approach includes impression management (people's efforts to present themselves favorably to others).
Sociology of emotions	We are socialized to feel certain emotions, and we learn how and when to express (or not express) them.
Nonverbal communication	The transfer of information between persons without the use of words, such as by facial expressions, head movements, and gestures.

Q&A Chapter Review

Use these questions and answers to check how well you've achieved the learning objectives set out at the beginning of this chapter.

LO1 Why is social structure important in our interaction with others?

The stable patterns of social relationships within a particular society make up its social structure. Social structure is a macrolevel influence because it shapes and determines the overall patterns in which social interaction occurs. Social structure provides an ordered framework for society and for our interactions with others. Social structure comprises statuses, roles, groups, and social institutions.

LO2 What are the differences among ascribed, achieved, and master statuses?

A status is a specific position in a group or society and is characterized by certain expectations, rights, and duties. Ascribed statuses, such as gender, class, and race/ethnicity, are acquired at birth or involuntarily later in life. Achieved statuses, such as education and occupation, are assumed voluntarily as a result of personal choice, merit, or direct effort. A master status is the most important status a person occupies. For some, occupation is the chief indicator of their status. Occupation provides important clues to a person's educational level, income, and family background. Master statuses confer high or low levels of personal worth and dignity on people.

LO3 How are role, role expectation, role performance, role conflict, role strain, and role exit alike or different?

A role is a set of behavioral expectations associated with a given status. Role expectation is a group's definition of the way that a specific role ought to be played, whereas role performance is how a person actually plays the role. When role conflict occurs, we may feel pulled in different directions. To deal with this problem, we may prioritize our roles and first complete the one we consider to be most important. Role conflict may occur as a result of changing statuses and roles in society. Role strain occurs when incompatible demands are built into a single status that a person occupies. For example, married women might feel role strain when they have to work full time, manage household duties, and take care of their family. Role exit occurs when people disengage from social roles that have been central to their self-identity. Role exit is a four-stage process, ending with the creation of a new identity.

LO4 What are the functionalist and conflict views on social institutions?

According to functionalist theorists, social institutions perform several prerequisites of all societies: replace members; teach new members; produce, distribute, and

consume goods and services; preserve order; and provide and maintain a sense of purpose. Conflict theorists suggest that social institutions do not work for the common good of all individuals: Institutions may enhance and uphold the power of some groups but exclude others, such as the homeless.

LO5 How does social change occur in preindustrial, industrial, and postindustrial societies?

According to Emile Durkheim, although changes in social structure may dramatically affect individuals and groups, societies manage to maintain some degree of stability. Social solidarity derives from a society's social structure, which, in turn, is based on the society's division of labor. People in preindustrial societies are united by mechanical solidarity because they have shared values and common social bonds. As societies industrialized and developed more specialized economic activities, social solidarity came to be rooted in the members' shared dependence on one another. Industrial societies are characterized by organic solidarity, which refers to the cohesion that results when people perform specialized tasks and are united by mutual dependence.

LO6 What are the symbolic interactionist views on the social construction of reality and the self-fulfilling prophecy?

The social construction of reality is the process by which our perception of reality is largely shaped by the subjective meaning that we give to an experience. We analyze a social

context in which we find ourselves, determine what is in our best interest, and adjust our attitudes and actions accordingly. This process can result in a self-fulfilling prophecy—a false belief or prediction that produces behavior that makes the originally false belief come true.

LO7 What are ethnomethodology and dramaturgical analysis?

Ethnomethodology is the study of the commonsense knowledge that people use to understand the situations in which they find themselves. Ethnomethodologists frequently break “rules” or act as though they do not understand some basic rule of social life so that they can observe other people's responses. According to Erving Goffman's dramaturgical analysis, our daily interactions are similar to dramatic productions. Presentation of self refers to efforts to present our own self to others in ways that are most favorable to our interests or self-image.

LO8 How do the sociology of emotions and the study of nonverbal communication add to our understanding of human behavior?

Our emotions are not always private, and specific emotions may be demanded of us on certain occasions. Feeling rules shape the appropriate emotions for a given role or specific situation. Nonverbal communication is the transfer of information between persons without the use of words. It establishes the relationship among people in terms of their responsiveness to and power over one another.

Key Terms

achieved status 97

agrarian society 105

ascribed status 97

division of labor 108

dramaturgical analysis 113

ethnomethodology 112

face-saving behavior 113

formal organization 101

Gemeinschaft 108

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Questions for **Critical Thinking**

- 1 Think of a person you know well who often irritates you or whose behavior grates on your nerves (it could be a parent, friend, relative, or teacher, among others). First, list that person's statuses and roles. Then analyze the person's possible role expectations, role performance, role conflicts, and role strains. Does anything you find in your analysis help to explain the irritating behavior? How helpful are the concepts of social structure in analyzing individual behavior?
- 2 You are conducting field research on gender differences in nonverbal communication styles. How are you going to account for variations among age, race, and social class?
- 3 When communicating with other genders, races, and ages, is it better to express and acknowledge different styles or to develop a common, uniform style?

Answers to **Sociology Quiz**

Persons Who Are Homeless and the Social Structure of Homelessness

1	True	Debt and deficit reduction at the federal level, combined with fiscal crises at the local and state levels, has reduced funds for assistance available to homeless people and the organizations that assist them.
2	False	A majority of people who are counted as homeless are found in emergency shelters or transitional housing programs, but these organizations offer only a temporary break from the larger problem of homelessness.
3	True	Many homeless people do have full-time employment, but they are among the working poor. The minimum-wage jobs they hold do not pay enough for them to support their families and pay the high rents that are typical in many cities.
4	True	Although many people think of homelessness as being based solely on lack of income to pay for housing, another significant factor is the cost of housing. In some cities and regions, the available housing simply is not affordable to people who have limited financial resources.
5	False	Many homeless people panhandle to pay for food, a bed at a shelter, or other survival needs.
6	True	Overcrowded shelters throughout the nation often attempt to accommodate as many homeless people as possible on a given night, particularly when the weather is bad. As a result, any available spaces—including offices, closets, and hallways—are used as sleeping areas until the individuals can find another location or weather conditions improve.
7	True	Scholars have found that homelessness has always existed in the United States. However, the number of homeless people has increased or decreased with fluctuations in the national economy.
8	False	The “doubled-up” population in the United States continues to increase as many people face difficult economic times, lack of affordable housing, and limited job opportunities.

Source: U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2018.



Groups and Organizations

5

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- 1 Differentiate** social groups from aggregates and categories.
- 2 Explain** the features of the different types of groups and the theoretical perspectives on the purpose of groups.
- 3 Discuss** how a group's size shapes its members' communication, leadership styles, and pressures to conform.
- 4 Explain** how groupthink causes people to respond differently in a group context than they would if they were alone.
- 5 Compare** the three categories of formal organizations.
- 6 Discuss** the merits and demerits of Max Weber's idea of bureaucracy and its contemporary applications.
- 7 Describe** the iron law of oligarchy.
- 8 Discuss** the features of the alternative forms of organizations that exist today in nations such as Japan, Russia, and India.

Ariel Skoley/Blend Images/Getty Images

SOCIOLOGY & **Everyday Life**

Social Media in the Classroom and the Real World

At my university, professors are divided about whether they should meddle [with students who bring smartphones, iPads or other tablets, and computers to class]. Our students, some say, are grown-ups. It is not for us to dictate how they take notes or to get involved if they let their attention wander from class-related materials. . . . I want to engage my students in conversation. I don't think they should use class time for any other purpose. . . . One year, I raised the topic for general discussion and suggested using notebooks (the paper kind) for note taking. Some of my students claimed to be relieved. . . . Others were annoyed, almost surly. . . . I maintained my resolve, but the following year, I bowed to common practice and allowed students to do what they wished.

—SHERRY TURKLE (2011), a professor at MIT, described her feelings in her book, *Alone Together*, about students' use of digital technology in classrooms where professors are attempting to form groups and build community among students

In Turkle's later book, *Reclaiming Conversation: The Power of Talk in a Digital Age* (2015: 3), she issues a call for people to break their addiction to digital technology and to reclaim the power of face-to-face conversations by spending time with others in social group settings:

We readily admit we would rather send an electronic message or mail than commit to a face-to-face meeting

or a telephone call. This new mediated life has gotten us in trouble. Face-to-face conversation is the most human—and humanizing—thing we do. Fully present to one another, we learn to listen. It's where we develop the capacity for empathy. It's where we experience the joy of being heard, of being understood.



Ariel Skelley/DigitalVision/Getty Images

Although books are still an integral part of higher education, computers and other digital technology are rapidly changing the social and learning environments of today's colleges and universities.

How important is your smartphone to you? How about your computer or tablet? Many of us are hesitant to tell other people how attached we are to our digital devices. One evening, I accidentally left my smartphone in my university office and then spent the rest of the night wondering if I was missing out on something. Although we have these attachments to technology, many of us also realize how important our groups (including our families) and/or clubs or other organizations are to us. According to sociologists, we need groups and organizations—just as we need culture and socialization—to live and participate in a society. Historically, the basic premise of groups and organizations was that individuals engage in face-to-face interactions in order to be part of a group, but much of that has changed as millions of people now communicate with others through information technology that makes it possible to “talk” with individuals they have never met and who may live thousands of miles away. Despite the wealth of information and opportunities for new social connections that technology may offer, many of our daily activities still require that we participate in social groups and formal organizations where *face*

time—in this case meaning time actually spent interacting with others on a face-to-face basis—is necessary.

What do social groups and formal organizations mean to us in an age of rapid telecommunications? What is the relationship between information and social organizations in societies such as ours? How can we balance the information that we provide to other people about us with our own right to privacy and need for security? These questions are of interest to sociologists who seek to apply the sociological imagination to their studies of social groups, bureaucratic organizations, social networking, and virtual communities. Before we have a closer look at groups and organizations, take the “Sociology and Everyday Life” quiz on issues pertaining to personal privacy in groups and organizations. ●

Social Groups

If you see three strangers standing at a street corner waiting for a traffic light to change, do they constitute a group? Five hundred women and men are first-year graduate students at a university. Do they constitute

How Much Do You Know About Personal Privacy in Groups and Organizations?

TRUE	FALSE	
T	F	1 A college student's privacy is protected when using a school-owned computer as long as he or she deletes from the computer all emails or other documents he or she has worked on and thus prevents anyone else from examining those documents.
T	F	2 Parents of students at all U.S. colleges and universities are entitled to obtain a transcript of their children's college grades, regardless of the student's age.
T	F	3 If you work for a business that monitors phone calls with a pen register (an electronic device that records information about calls to or from a particular phone extension), your employer has the right to maintain and examine a list of phone numbers dialed by your extension and how long each call lasted.
T	F	4 Members of a high school football team can be required to submit to periodic, unannounced drug testing.
T	F	5 A company has the right to keep its employees under video surveillance anywhere at the company's place of business—even in the restrooms.
T	F	6 A professor can legally post students' grades in public, using the student's Social Security number as an identifier, as long as the student's name does not appear with the number.
T	F	7 Someone at a church youth-group meeting who hears a member of the group confess to an illegal act can be required to divulge what that member said.
T	F	8 If you are employed, your employer can require that medical personnel provide the company with your medical records.

Answers can be found at the end of the chapter.

a group? In everyday usage, we use the word *group* to mean any collection of people. According to sociologists, however, the answer to these questions is no; individuals who happen to share a common feature or are in the same place at the same time do not constitute social groups.

Groups, Aggregates, and Categories

As you will recall from Chapter 4, a *social group* is a collection of two or more people who interact frequently with one another, share a sense of belonging, and have a feeling of interdependence. Several people waiting for a traffic light to change constitute an *aggregate*—a collection of people who happen to be in the same place at the same time but share little else in common. Shoppers in a department store and passengers on an airplane flight are also examples of aggregates. People in aggregates share a common purpose (such as purchasing items or arriving at their destination) but generally do not interact with one another, except perhaps briefly. The first-year graduate

students, at least initially, constitute a *category*—a number of people who may never have met one another but share a similar characteristic, such as education level, age, race, or gender. Men and women make up categories, as do Native Americans and Latinxs and victims of sexual or racial harassment. Categories are not social groups because the people in them do not usually create a social structure or have anything in common other than a particular trait.

Occasionally, people in aggregates and categories form social groups. For instance, people within the category known as “graduate students” may become an aggregate

aggregate

a collection of people who happen to be in the same place at the same time but share little else in common.

category

a number of people who may never have met one another but share a similar characteristic, such as education level, age, race, or gender.

when they get together for an orientation to graduate school. Some of them may form social groups as they interact with one another in classes and seminars, find that they have mutual interests and concerns, and develop a sense of belonging to the group. Information technology raises new and interesting questions about what constitutes a group.

Where do our social media “friends” fit into these categories? Some social scientists believe that virtual communities established online constitute true communities (Wellman, 2001), but others do not. According to sociologists Robyn Bateman Driskell and Larry Lyon, although the Internet provides us with the opportunity to share interests with others whom we have not met and to communicate with people whom we already know, the original concept of community, which “emphasized local place, common ties, and social interaction that is intimate, holistic, and all-encompassing,” is lacking in social media (2002: 6). Why? Because virtual online communities do not have geographic and social boundaries, are limited in their scope to specific areas of interest, are psychologically detached from close interpersonal ties, and have only limited concern for their members. In fact, people who spend hours in isolation on social media may reduce community rather than enhance it, and there is a chance that they will create a weak replacement for people based on specialized ties they develop through extended, remote interaction with others (Driskell and Lyon, 2002). What do you think?

Types of Groups

As you will recall from Chapter 4, groups have varying degrees of social solidarity and structure. This structure is flexible in some groups and more rigid in others. Some groups are small and personal; others are large and

impersonal. We more closely identify with the members of some groups than we do with others (see ■Figure 5.1).

Cooley’s Primary and Secondary Groups Sociologist Charles H. Cooley (1963/1909) used the term *primary group* to describe a small, less specialized group in which members engage in face-to-face, emotion-based interactions over an extended period of time. We have primary relationships with other individuals in our primary groups—that is, with our *significant others*, who frequently serve as role models.

In contrast, as you will recall, a *secondary group* is a larger, more specialized group in which the members engage in more impersonal, goal-oriented relationships for a limited period of time. The size of a secondary group may vary. Twelve students in a graduate seminar may start out as a secondary group but eventually become a primary group as they get to know one another and communicate on a more personal basis. Formal organizations are secondary groups, but they also contain many primary groups within them. For example, how many primary groups do you think there are within the secondary-group setting of your college?

Sumner’s Ingroups and Outgroups All groups set boundaries by distinguishing between insiders who are members and outsiders who are not members (■Figure 5.2). Sociologist William Graham Sumner (1959/1906) coined the terms *ingroup* and *outgroup* to describe people’s feelings toward members of their own and other groups. An *ingroup* is a group to which a person belongs and with which the person feels a sense of identity. An *outgroup* is a group to which a person does not belong and toward which the person may feel a sense of competitiveness or hostility. Distinguishing between our ingroups and our outgroups helps us establish our individual identity and self-worth.

Likewise, groups are solidified by ingroup and outgroup distinctions; the presence of an enemy or a hostile group binds members more closely together (Coser, 1956).

Group boundaries may be formal, with clearly defined criteria for membership. For example, a private city club or country club that requires an applicant for membership to be recommended by four current members and to pay a \$100,000 initiation fee has clearly set requirements for its members and established ingroup and outgroup distinctions. Formal group boundaries are reinforced by “invitation-only” policies for membership and the privacy and exclusivity of life inside the club. Many clubs have “Members Only” signs to indicate that the organization does not welcome outsiders within club walls. As a result, club members develop a *consciousness of kind*—the awareness that individuals have when they believe that they share important commonalities with



LightField Studios Inc./Alamy Stock Photo

FIGURE 5.1 Social media sites are extremely popular with millions of people; however, some sociologists question whether we can form actual social groups and true communities on the Internet. Is posting on social networking sites different from our face-to-face interactions with others?



Jim West/Alamy Stock Photo



Jeffrey Isaac Greenberg 6/Alamy Stock Photo

FIGURE 5.2 Sometimes, the distinction between what constitutes an ingroup and an outgroup is subtle. Other times, it is not subtle at all. Would you feel comfortable entering or joining a club such as this?

certain other people. Consciousness of kind is strengthened by membership in clubs ranging from country clubs to college sororities, fraternities, and other by-invitation-only college or university social clubs (Kendall, 2008).

In our own lives, most of us are aware that our ingroups provide us with a unique sense of identity. But sometimes we are less aware that they also give us the ability to exclude individuals whom we do not want to be in our inner circle of friends. Early sociologist Max Weber captured this idea in his description of the *closed relationship*—a setting in which the “participation of certain persons is excluded, limited, or subjected to conditions” (Gerth and Mills, 1946: 139). Ingroup and outgroup distinctions may encourage social cohesion among members, but they may also promote classism,

racism, sexism, and ageism. Ingroup members typically view themselves positively and members of outgroups negatively. These feelings of group superiority, or *ethnocentrism*, are somewhat inevitable. Some group members may never act on these beliefs of superiority and inferiority because the larger organization of which they are a part actively discourages ethnocentric beliefs and discriminatory actions. However, other organizations may covertly foster ethnocentrism and negative ingroup/outgroup distinctions by denying that these beliefs exist among group members or by failing to take action when misconduct occurs that is rooted in racism, sexism, and/or ageism. An example is a college Greek letter organization in which the fraternity’s or sorority’s national leadership strongly opposes theme parties with racist or sexist overtones sponsored on local campuses, but its affiliates continue to hold social gatherings with decorations, clothing, music, and slogans that ridicule subordinate-group members such as persons of color, older individuals, persons with a disability, or women viewed as sex objects. Although campus social organizations often promote social cohesion among members by making them feel like they are the “in group” and everyone else is the “out group,” such beliefs and practices may also promote classism, racism, sexism, and/or ageism.

Reference Groups Ingroups provide us not only with a source of identity but also with a point of reference. A *reference group* is a group that strongly influences a person’s behavior and social attitudes, regardless of whether that individual is an actual member. When we attempt to evaluate our appearance, ideas, or goals, we automatically refer to the standards of some group. Sometimes, we will refer to our membership groups, such as family or friends. Other times, we will rely on groups to which we do not currently belong but that we might wish to join in the future, such as a social club or a profession.

Reference groups help explain why our behavior and attitudes sometimes differ from those of our membership groups. We may accept the values and norms of a group with which we identify rather than one to which we belong. We may also act more like members of a group that we want to join than members of groups to which we already belong. In this case, reference groups are a source of anticipatory socialization. For most of us, our reference-group attachments change many times during our life course, especially when we acquire a new status in a formal organization.

ingroup

a group to which a person belongs and with which the person feels a sense of identity.

outgroup

a group to which a person does not belong and toward which the person may feel a sense of competitiveness or hostility.

reference group

a group that strongly influences a person’s behavior and social attitudes, regardless of whether that individual is an actual member.

Networks A *network* is a web of social relationships that links one person with other people and, through them, with other people they know. Frequently, networks connect people who share common interests but who otherwise might not identify and interact with one another. For example, if A is tied to B, and B is tied to C, then a network is more likely to be formed among individuals A, B, and C. Today, the term *networking* is used widely to describe the contacts that people make to find jobs or other opportunities. Sociologists have studied social networks for many years in an effort to learn more about the linkages between individuals and their group memberships.

What are your networks? For a start, your networks consist of all the people linked to you by primary ties, including your relatives and close friends. Your networks also include your secondary ties, such as acquaintances, classmates, professors, and—if you are employed—your supervisor and coworkers. However, your networks actually extend far beyond these ties to include not only the people that you *know* but also the people that you *know of*—and who know of you—through your primary and secondary ties. In fact, your networks potentially include a pool of between 500 and 2,500 acquaintances if you count the connections of everyone in your networks (Milgram, 1967).

The Purpose of Groups: Multiple Perspectives

What purpose do groups serve? Why are individuals willing to relinquish some of their freedom to participate in groups? According to classical functionalist theorists, people form groups to meet instrumental and expressive needs. *Instrumental*, or task-oriented, needs cannot always be met by one person, so the group works cooperatively to fulfill a specific goal. Groups help members do jobs that are impossible to do alone or that would be very difficult and time-consuming at best. For example, think of how hard it would be to function as a one-person football team or to single-handedly build a skyscraper. In addition to instrumental needs, groups also help people meet their *expressive*, or emotional, needs, especially those involving self-expression and support from family, friends, and peers.

Although not disputing that groups ideally perform such functions, conflict theorists suggest that groups also involve a series of power relationships whereby the needs of individual members may not be equally served. Symbolic interactionists focus on how the size of a group influences the kind of interaction that takes place among members. To many postmodernists, groups and organizations—like other aspects of postmodern societies—are generally characterized by superficiality and depthlessness in social relationships. For example, fast-food restaurant employees and customers interact in extremely superficial ways that are largely scripted: The employees follow scripts in taking and filling customers' orders ("Would you like fries and a drink with that?"), and the customers respond with their own "recipied" action. According to sociologist George Ritzer

(1997: 226), "[C]ustomers are mindlessly following what they consider tried-and-true social recipes, either learned or created by them previously, on how to deal with restaurant employees and, more generally, how to work their way through the system associated with the fast-food restaurant." What examples can you think of that fit this description?

Group Characteristics and Dynamics

We now look at certain characteristics of groups, such as how size affects group dynamics.

Group Size

The size of a group is one of its most important features. Interactions are more personal and intense in a *small group*, a collectivity small enough for all members to be acquainted with one another and to interact simultaneously.

Sociologist Georg Simmel (1950/1902–1917) suggested that small groups have distinctive interaction patterns that do not exist in larger groups. According to Simmel, in a *dyad*—a group composed of two members—the active participation of both members is crucial to the group's survival. If one member withdraws from interaction or "quits," the group ceases to exist. Examples of dyads include two people who are best friends, married couples, and domestic partnerships. Dyads provide members with an intense bond and a sense of unity not found in larger groups.

When a third person is added to a dyad, a *triad*, a group composed of three members, is formed. The nature of the relationship and interaction patterns change with the addition of the third person (■ Figure 5.3). In a triad, even if one member ignores another or declines to participate, the group can still function. In addition, two members may unite to create a coalition that can subject the third member to pressure to conform. A *coalition* is an alliance created in an attempt to reach a shared objective or goal. If two members form a coalition, the other member may be seen as an outsider or intruder.

As the size of a group increases beyond three people, members tend to specialize in different tasks, and everyday communication patterns change. For instance, in groups of more than six or seven people, it becomes increasingly difficult for everyone to take part in the same conversation; therefore, several conversations will probably take place simultaneously. Members are also likely to take sides on issues and form a number of coalitions. In groups of more than ten or twelve people, it becomes virtually impossible for all members to participate in a single conversation unless one person serves as moderator and guides the discussion. As shown in ■ Figure 5.4, when the size of the group increases, the number of possible social interactions also increases.

Although large groups typically have less social solidarity than small ones, they may have more power. However, the relationship between size and power is



Samo Tebrian/Shutterstock.com

FIGURE 5.3 According to sociologist Georg Simmel, interaction patterns change when a third person joins a dyad—a group composed of two members. How might the conversation between these two women have changed when the man arrived to talk to them?

more complicated than it might initially seem. The power relationship depends on both a group's *absolute* size and its *relative* size (Merton, 1968; Simmel, 1950/1902–1917). The absolute size is the number of members the group actually has; the relative size is the number of potential members. For example, suppose that 300 people band together to “march on Washington” and demand enactment of a law on some issue that they strongly believe to be important. Although 300 people is a large number in some contexts, opponents of this group would argue that the low turnout (compared with the number of people in this country) demonstrates that most people don't believe the issue is important. At the same time, the power of a small group to demand change may be based on a “strength in numbers” factor if the group is seen as speaking on behalf of a large number of other people (who are also voters).

Larger groups typically have more formalized leadership structures, and their leaders are expected to perform a variety of roles, some related to the internal workings of the group and others related to external relationships with other groups.

Group Leadership

What role do leaders play in groups? **Leadership** refers to the ability to influence what goes on in a group or social system. Leaders are responsible for directing plans and activities so that the group completes its task or fulfills its goals. Primary groups generally have informal leadership. For example, most of us do not elect or appoint leaders in our own families. Various family members may assume a leadership role at various times or act as leaders for specific

tasks. In previous centuries the father or eldest male was usually the leader of the family. However, in today's more diverse families, leadership and power are frequently in question, and power relationships may be quite different, as discussed later in this text. By comparison, larger groups typically have more formalized leadership structures. For example, leadership in secondary groups (such as colleges, governmental agencies, and corporations) involves a clearly defined chain of command, with written responsibilities assigned to each position in the organizational structure.

Leadership Functions Both primary and secondary groups have some type of leadership

or positions that enable certain people to be leaders, or at least to wield power over others. From a functionalist perspective, if groups exist to meet the instrumental and expressive needs of their members, then leaders are responsible for helping the group meet those needs. **Instrumental leadership** is goal or task oriented; this type of leadership is most appropriate when the group's purpose is to complete a task or reach a particular goal. **Expressive leadership** provides emotional support for members; this type of leadership is most appropriate when the group is dealing with emotional issues, and harmony, solidarity, and high morale are needed. Both kinds of leadership are needed for groups to work effectively.

network

a web of social relationships that links one person with other people and, through them, with other people they know.

small group

a collectivity small enough for all members to be acquainted with one another and to interact simultaneously.

dyad

a group composed of two members.

triad

a group composed of three members.

leadership

the ability to influence what goes on in a group or social system.

instrumental leadership

goal- or task-oriented leadership.

expressive leadership

leadership that provides emotional support for members.

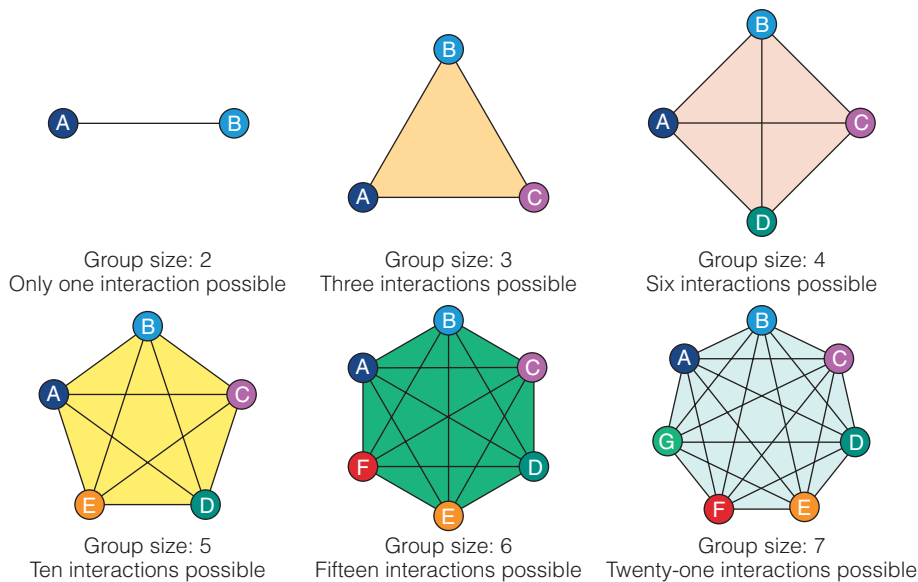


FIGURE 5.4 Growth of Possible Social Interaction Based on Group Size

Leadership Styles Three major styles of leadership exist in groups: authoritarian, democratic, and laissez-faire. **Authoritarian leaders** make all major group decisions and assign tasks to members. These leaders focus on the instrumental tasks of the group and demand compliance from others (■ Figure 5.5). In times of crisis, such as a war or natural disaster, authoritarian leaders may be commended for their decisive actions. In other situations, however, they may be criticized for being dictatorial and for fostering intergroup hostility. By contrast, **democratic leaders** encourage group discussion and decision making through

consensus building. These leaders may be praised for their expressive, supportive behavior toward group members, but they may also be blamed for being indecisive in times of crisis.

Laissez-faire literally means “to leave alone.” **Laissez-faire leaders** are only minimally involved in decision making and encourage group members to make their own decisions. On the one hand, laissez-faire leaders may be viewed positively by group members because they do not flaunt their power or position. On the other hand, a group that needs active leadership is not likely to find it with this style of leadership, which does not work vigorously to promote group goals.

Studies of kinds of leadership and decision-making styles have certain inherent limitations. They tend to focus on leadership that is imposed externally on a group (such as bosses or political leaders) rather than leadership that arises within a group. Different decision-making styles may be more effective in one setting than another. For example, imagine attending a college class in which the professor asked the students to determine what should be covered in the course, what the course requirements should be, and how students should be graded. It would be a difficult and cumbersome way to start the semester; students might

spend the entire term negotiating these matters and never actually learn anything.



Robert Nickelsberg/Getty Images

FIGURE 5.5 Organizations have different leadership styles based on the purpose of the group. How do leadership styles in the military differ from those on college and university campuses and in office workplaces, for example?

Group Conformity

To what extent do groups exert a powerful influence on our lives? Groups have a significant amount of influence on our values, attitudes, and behavior. In order to gain and then retain our membership in groups, most of us are willing to exhibit a high level of conformity to the wishes of other group members. **Conformity** is the process of maintaining or changing behavior to comply with the norms established by a society, subculture, or other group. We often experience powerful pressure from other group members to

conform. In some situations, this pressure may be almost overwhelming.

Researchers have found that the pressure to conform may cause group members to say they see something that is contradictory to what they are actually seeing or to do something that they would otherwise be unwilling to do. Conforming to group pressure begins as early as preschool age (Haun and Tomasello, 2011). As we look at two classic studies on group conformity (which would be impossible to conduct today for ethical reasons), ask yourself what you might have done if you had been involved in this research.

Asch's Research Pressure to conform is especially strong in small groups in which members want to fit in with the group. In a series of experiments conducted by Solomon Asch (1955, 1956), the pressure toward group conformity was so great that participants were willing to contradict their own best judgment if the rest of the group disagreed with them.

One of Asch's experiments involved groups of undergraduate men (seven in each group) who were allegedly recruited for a study of visual perception. All the men were seated in chairs. However, the person in the sixth chair did not know that he was the only actual subject; all the others were assisting the researcher. The participants were first shown a large card with a vertical line on it and then a second card with three vertical lines (see ■ Figure 5.6). Each of the seven participants was asked to indicate which of the three lines on the second card was identical in length to the "standard line" on the first card.

In the first trial with each group, all seven men selected the correct matching line. In the second trial, all seven still answered correctly. In the third trial, however, the actual subject became very uncomfortable when all the others selected the incorrect line. The subject could not understand what was happening and became even more confused as the others continued to give incorrect responses on eleven out of the next fifteen trials.

Asch (1955) found that about one-third of all subjects chose to conform by giving the same (incorrect) responses as Asch's assistants. In discussing the experiment afterward, most of the subjects who gave incorrect responses indicated that they had known the answers were wrong but decided to go along with the group in order to avoid ridicule or ostracism.

Asch concluded that the size of the group and the degree of social cohesion felt by the participants were important influences on the extent to which individuals respond to group pressure. If you had been in the position of the subject, how would you have responded? Would you have continued to give the correct answer, or would you have been swayed by the others?

Milgram's Research How willing are we to do something because someone in a position of authority has told us to do it? How far are we willing to go to follow the demands of that individual? Stanley Milgram (1963, 1974) conducted a

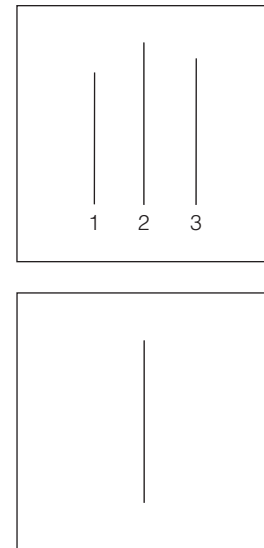


FIGURE 5.6 Asch's Cards

Although Line 2 is clearly the same length as the line in the lower card, Solomon Asch's research assistants tried to influence "actual" participants by deliberately picking Line 1 or Line 3 as the correct match. Many of the participants went along rather than risking the opposition of the "group."

Source: Asch, 1955.

series of controversial experiments to find answers to these questions about people's obedience to authority. *Obedience* is a form of compliance in which people follow direct orders from someone in a position of authority.

Milgram's subjects were men who had responded to an advertisement seeking individuals to participate in an experiment. When the first (actual) subject arrived, he was told that the study concerned the effects of punishment on learning. After the second subject (an assistant of Milgram's) arrived, the two men were instructed to draw slips of paper from a hat to get their assignments as either the "teacher" or the "learner." Because the drawing was rigged, the actual subject always became the teacher, and the assistant the learner. Next, the learner was strapped into a chair with protruding electrodes that looked something like an electric chair. The teacher was placed in an adjoining room and given a realistic-looking but nonoperative shock generator. The "generator's" control panel showed levels that went

authoritarian leaders

leaders who make all major group decisions and assign tasks to members.

democratic leaders

leaders who encourage group discussion and decision making through consensus building.

laissez-faire leaders

leaders who are only minimally involved in decision making and who encourage group members to make their own decisions.

conformity

the process of maintaining or changing behavior to comply with the norms established by a society, subculture, or other group.

from “Slight shock” (15 volts) on the left, to “Intense shock” (255 volts) in the middle, to “Danger: severe shock” (375 volts), and finally “XXX” (450 volts) on the right.

The teacher was instructed to read aloud a pair of words and then repeat the first of the two words. At that time, the learner was supposed to respond with the second of the two words. If the learner could not provide the second word, the teacher was instructed to press the lever on the shock generator so that the learner would be punished for forgetting the word. Each time the learner gave an incorrect response, the teacher was supposed to increase the shock level by 15 volts. The alleged purpose of the shock was to determine whether punishment improves a person’s memory.

What was the maximum level of shock that a “teacher” was willing to inflict on a “learner”? The learner had been instructed (in advance) to beat on the wall between him and the teacher as the experiment continued, pretending that he was in intense pain. The teacher was told that the shocks might be “extremely painful” but that they would cause no permanent damage. At about 300 volts, when the learner quit responding at all to questions, the teacher often turned to the experimenter to see what he should do next. When the experimenter indicated that the teacher should give increasingly painful shocks, 65 percent of the teachers administered shocks all the way up to the “XXX” (450-volt) level (see ■ Figure 5.7). By this point in the process, the teachers were frequently sweating, stuttering, or biting on their lip. According to Milgram, the teachers (who were free to leave whenever they wanted to) continued in the experiment because they were being given directions by a person in a position of authority (a university scientist wearing a white coat).

What can we learn from Milgram’s study? The study provides evidence that obedience to authority may be

more common than most of us would like to believe. None of the “teachers” challenged the process before they had applied 300 volts. Almost two-thirds went all the way to what could have been a deadly jolt of electricity if the shock generator had been real. For many years, Milgram’s findings were found to be consistent in a number of different settings and with variations in the research design (Miller, 1986).

This research once again raises some questions concerning research ethics. As was true of Asch’s research, Milgram’s subjects were deceived about the nature of the study in which they were asked to participate. Many of them found the experiment extremely stressful. Such conditions cannot be ignored by social scientists because subjects may receive lasting emotional scars from this kind of research. Today, it would be virtually impossible to obtain permission to replicate this experiment in a university setting.

Groupthink

As we have seen, individuals often respond differently in a group context than they might if they were alone. Social psychologist Irving Janis (1972, 1989) examined group decision making among political experts and found that major blunders in U.S. history can be attributed to pressure toward group conformity. To describe this phenomenon, he coined the term *groupthink*—the process by which members of a cohesive group arrive at a decision that many individual members privately believe is unwise. Why not speak up at the time? Members usually want to be “team players.” They may not want to be the ones who undermine the group’s consensus or who challenge the group’s leaders. Consequently, members often limit or withhold their opinions

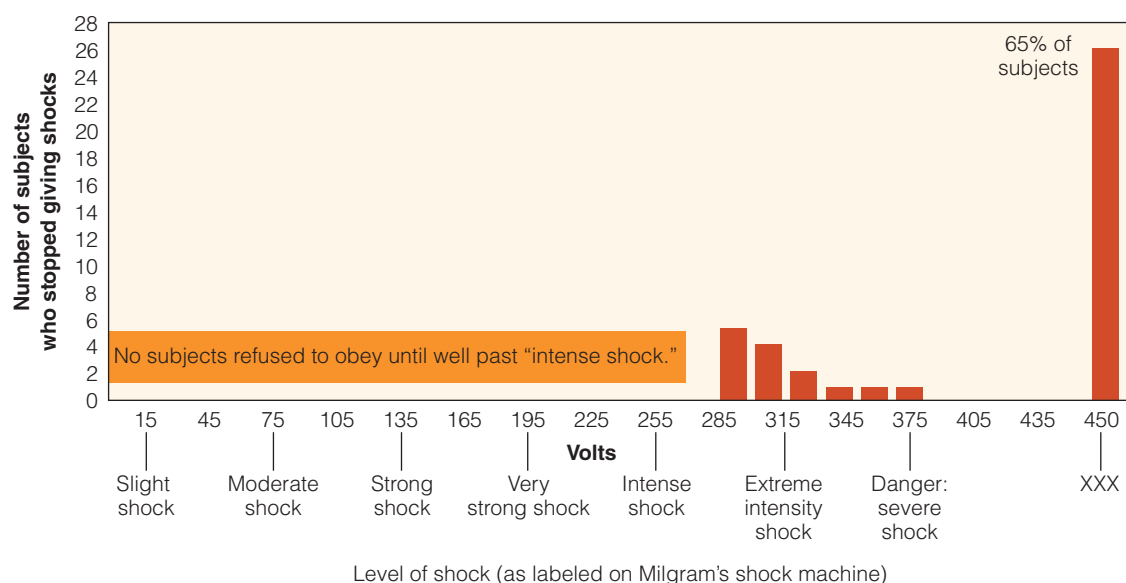
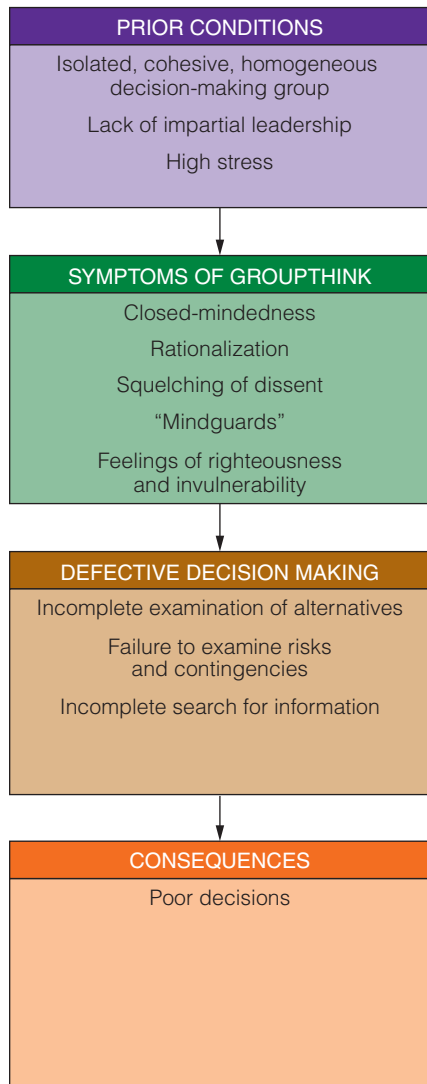


FIGURE 5.7 Results of Milgram’s Obedience Experiment

Even Milgram was surprised by subjects’ willingness to administer what they thought were severely painful and even dangerous shocks to a helpless “learner.”

Source: Milgram, 1963.

Process of Groupthink



Example: Deepwater Horizon Explosion

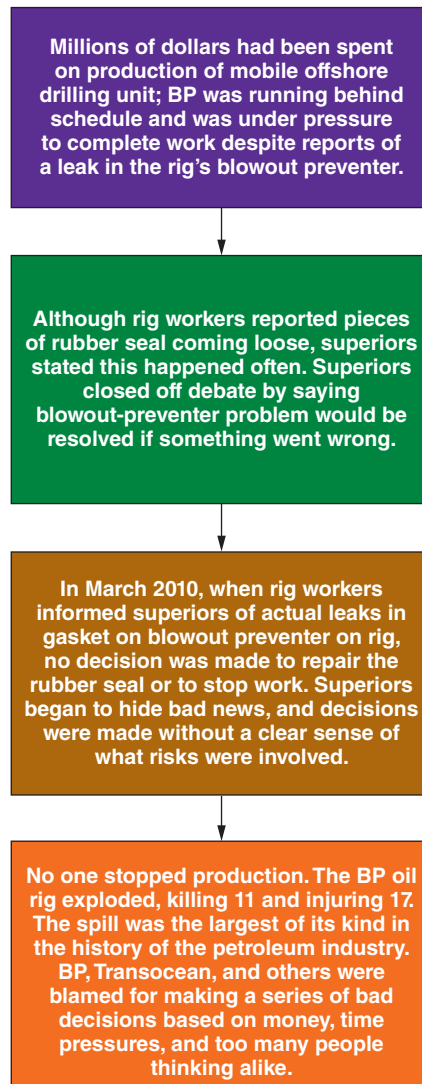


FIGURE 5.8 Janis's Description of Groupthink

In Janis's model, prior conditions such as a highly homogeneous group with committed leadership can lead to potentially disastrous "groupthink," which short-circuits careful and impartial deliberation. Events leading up to the tragic 2010 explosion of the BP *Deepwater Horizon* oil rig are often cited as one example of this process.

Source: Mackin, 2010.

and focus on consensus rather than on exploring all of the options and determining the best course of action. ■ Figure 5.8 summarizes the dynamics and results of groupthink.

The tragic explosion of the BP *Deepwater Horizon* oil rig, owned by British Petroleum and located in the Gulf of Mexico, is an example of this process. Errors in decision making contributed to one of the worst oil spills and marine and wildlife disasters in U.S. history. Eleven people were killed and seventeen were injured in the rig explosion, and it is impossible to estimate the full extent of the damage done to the Gulf Coast and the fishing and tourism industries because of this massive accident. Why is this disaster an example of groupthink? Because officials for BP, Transocean, and Halliburton, the major transnational corporations responsible for this error in decision making, closed off their discussions about safety and hid bad news from one another and public officials; because they began to think alike in their assumption about safety, namely, that a blow-out preventer would keep such a massive disaster from occurring; and because their companies were already behind schedule, had put millions of dollars into production, and did not want to stop to check out reports that a rubber safety seal was broken.



U.S. Coast Guard/Handout/Getty Images

groupthink

the process by which members of a cohesive group arrive at a decision that many individual members privately believe is unwise.

Formal Organizations in Global Perspective

Over the past century, the number of formal organizations has increased dramatically in the United States and other industrialized nations. Previously, everyday life was centered in small, informal, primary groups, such as the family and the village. With the advent of industrialization and urbanization (as discussed in Chapter 1), people's lives became increasingly dominated by large, formal, secondary organizations. A *formal organization*, you will recall, is a highly structured secondary group formed for the purpose of achieving specific goals in the most efficient manner. Formal organizations (such as corporations, schools, and government agencies) usually keep their basic structure for many years in order to meet their specific goals.

Types of Formal Organizations

We join some organizations voluntarily and others out of necessity. Sociologist Amitai Etzioni (1975) classified formal organizations into three categories—normative, coercive, and utilitarian—based on the nature of membership in each.

Normative Organizations We voluntarily join *normative organizations* when we want to pursue some common interest or gain personal satisfaction or prestige from being a member (■ Figure 5.9). Political parties, ecological activist groups, religious organizations, parent–teacher associations, and college sororities and fraternities are examples of normative, or voluntary, associations.

Class, gender, and race are important determinants of a person's participation in a normative association. Class (socioeconomic status based on a person's education, occupation, and income) is the most significant predictor of whether a person will participate in mainstream normative organizations; membership costs may exclude some from joining. Those with higher socioeconomic status are more likely to be not only members but also active participants in these groups. Gender is also an important determinant. Historically, all-male voluntary organizations have had a higher level of prestige than many women's organizations. In the twenty-first century, however, some of these patterns have changed.

Throughout history, people of all racial–ethnic categories have participated in voluntary organizations to bring about racial equality and social justice. Women have often taken leadership roles in these movements. African



Jim West/Alamy Stock Photo

FIGURE 5.9 Normative organizations such as the Red Cross rely on volunteers to fulfill their goals.

CONCEPT Quick Review

Characteristics of Groups and Organizations

Types of Social Groups	Primary group	Small, less specialized group in which members engage in face-to-face, emotion-based interaction over an extended period of time
	Secondary group	Larger, more specialized group in which members engage in more impersonal, goal-oriented relationships for a limited period of time
	Ingroup	A group to which a person belongs and with which the person feels a sense of identity
	Outgroup	A group to which a person does not belong and toward which the person may feel a sense of competitiveness or hostility
	Reference group	A group that strongly influences a person's behavior and social attitudes, regardless of whether the person is actually a member
Group Size	Dyad	A group composed of two members
	Triad	A group composed of three members
	Formal organization	A highly structured secondary group formed for the purpose of achieving specific goals
Types of Formal Organizations	Normative	Organizations that we join voluntarily to pursue some common interest or gain personal satisfaction or prestige by joining
	Coercive	Associations that people are forced to join (total institutions such as boot camps and prisons are examples)
	Utilitarian	Organizations that we join voluntarily when they can provide us with a material reward that we seek

American women were actively involved in antislavery societies in the nineteenth century and in the civil rights movement in the twentieth century. Similarly, Native American women have participated in the American Indian Movement, a group organized to fight problems ranging from police brutality to housing and employment discrimination. Mexican American women have held a wide range of leadership positions in the La Raza Unida Party and the League of United Latin American Citizens, organizations oriented toward civic activities and protests against injustices.

Coercive Organizations People do not voluntarily become members of *coercive organizations*—associations that people are forced to join. Total institutions, such as boot camps, prisons, and some mental hospitals, are examples of coercive organizations. As discussed in Chapter 3, the assumed goal of total institutions is to resocialize people through incarceration. These environments are characterized by restrictive barriers (such as locks, bars, and security guards) that make it impossible for people to leave freely. When people leave without being officially dismissed, their exit is referred to as an “escape.”

Utilitarian Organizations We voluntarily join *utilitarian organizations* when they can provide us with a material reward that we seek. To make a living or earn a college degree, we must participate in organizations that

can provide us these opportunities. Although we have some choice regarding where we work or attend school, utilitarian organizations are not always completely voluntary. For example, most people must continue to work even if the conditions of their employment are less than ideal. (This chapter's Concept Quick Review summarizes the types of groups, sizes of groups, and types of formal organizations.)

Bureaucracies

The bureaucratic model of organization remains the most universal organizational form in government, business, education, and religion. A *bureaucracy* is an organizational model characterized by a hierarchy of authority, a clear division of labor, explicit rules and procedures, and impersonality in personnel matters.

Sociologist Max Weber (1968/1922) was interested in the historical trend toward bureaucratization that accelerated during the Industrial Revolution. To Weber, bureaucracy was the most “rational” and efficient means

bureaucracy

an organizational model characterized by a hierarchy of authority, a clear division of labor, explicit rules and procedures, and impersonality in personnel matters.

of attaining organizational goals because it contributed to coordination and control. According to Weber, **rationality** is the process by which traditional methods of social organization, characterized by informality and spontaneity, are gradually replaced by efficiently administered formal rules and procedures. Bureaucracy can be seen in all aspects of our lives, from small colleges with perhaps a thousand students to multinational corporations employing many thousands of workers worldwide.

In his study of bureaucracies, Weber relied on an ideal-type analysis, which he adapted from the field of economics. An **ideal type** is an abstract model that describes the recurring characteristics of some phenomenon (such as bureaucracy). To develop this ideal type, Weber abstracted the most characteristic bureaucratic aspects of religious, educational, political, and business organizations. Weber acknowledged that no existing organization would exactly fit his ideal type of bureaucracy.

Ideal Characteristics of Bureaucracy Weber set forth several ideal-type characteristics of bureaucratic organizations. His model (see ■ Figure 5.10) highlights the organizational efficiency and productivity that bureaucracies strive for in these five central elements of the ideal organization:

- **Division of labor.** Bureaucratic organizations are characterized by specialization, and each member has highly specialized tasks to fulfill.
- **Hierarchy of authority.** In a bureaucracy, each lower office is under the control and supervision of a higher one. Those few individuals at the top of the hierarchy have more power and exercise more control than do the many at the lower levels. Those who are lower in the hierarchy report to (and often take orders from) those above them in the organizational pyramid. Persons at the upper levels are responsible not only for their own actions but also for those of the individuals they supervise.



John Atkins/Spirit/Corbis

Characteristics

- Division of labor
- Hierarchy of authority
- Rules and regulations
- Qualification-based employment
- Impersonality



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Effects

- Inefficiency and rigidity
- Resistance to change
- Perpetuation of race, class, and gender inequalities

- **Rules and regulations.** Rules and regulations establish authority within an organization. These rules are typically standardized and provided to members in a written format. In theory, written rules and regulations offer clear-cut standards for determining satisfactory performance so that each new member does not have to reinvent the rules.
- **Qualification-based employment.** Bureaucracies require competence and hire staff members and professional employees based on specific qualifications. Individual performance is evaluated against specific standards, and promotions are based on merit as spelled out in personnel policies.
- **Impersonality.** Bureaucracies require that everyone must play by the same rules and be treated the same. Personal feelings should not interfere with organizational decisions.

Contemporary Applications of Weber's Theory How well do Weber's theory of rationality and his ideal-type characteristics of bureaucracy withstand the test of time? More than a century later, many organizational theorists still apply Weber's perspective (see ■ Figure 5.11). For example, sociologist George Ritzer used Weber's theories to examine fast-food restaurants such as McDonald's. According to Ritzer, the process of "McDonaldization" has become a global phenomenon that can be seen in fast-food restaurants and other "speedy" or "jiffy" businesses (such as Sir Speedy Printing and Jiffy Lube). *McDonaldization* is the term coined by Ritzer to describe the process of rationalization, which takes a task and breaks it down into smaller tasks. This process is repeated until all tasks have been broken down into the smallest possible level. The resulting tasks are then rationalized to find the single most efficient method for completing each task. The result is an efficient, logical sequence of methods that can be completed the same way every time to produce the desired outcome. Ritzer (2014) identifies four dimensions of formal rationality (McDonaldization) found in fast-food restaurants:

- **Efficiency** means the search for the best means to the end; the drive-through window is a good example of heightening the efficiency of obtaining a meal.
- **Predictability** means a world of no surprises; the Big Mac in Los Angeles is indistinguishable from the one in New York. Similarly, the one we consume tomorrow or next year will be just like the one we eat today.

FIGURE 5.10 Characteristics and Effects of Bureaucracy

The very characteristics that define Weber's idealized bureaucracy can create or exacerbate the problems that many people associate with this type of organization. Can you apply this model to an organization with which you are familiar?



Skynesher/Stock/Getty Images

FIGURE 5.11 Colleges and universities rely on testing to evaluate students' progress in courses. How do such tests relate to Weber's model of bureaucracy?

- *Emphasis on quantity rather than quality.* The Big Mac is a good example of this emphasis on quantity rather than quality.
- *Control through nonhuman technologies* such as unskilled cooks following detailed directions and assembly-line methods applied to the cooking and serving of food.

Finally, such a formally rational system brings with it various irrationalities, most notably the dehumanization of the dining experience. For example, people in a McDonaldized world may become more enthusiastic about quickly purchasing extremely large portions of relatively inexpensive foods than with having a “slow” dining experience where people bond over cooking and eating a more nutritious (not mass-produced) meal with their friends or family.

How applicable are some of Weber's ideas today? While still useful, Weber's ideal type largely failed to take into account the informal side of bureaucracy.

The Informal Side of Bureaucracy When we look at an organizational chart, the official, formal structure of

a bureaucracy is readily apparent. In practice, however, a bureaucracy has patterns of activities and interactions that cannot be accounted for by its organizational chart. These have been referred to as *bureaucracy's other face* (Page, 1946).

The **informal side of a bureaucracy** is composed of those aspects of participants' day-to-day activities and interactions that ignore, bypass, or do not correspond with the official rules and procedures of the bureaucracy. An example is an informal “grapevine” that spreads information (with varying degrees of accuracy) much faster than do official channels of communication, which tend to be slow and unresponsive (■Figure 5.12). The informal structure has also been referred to as *work culture* because it includes the ideology and practices of workers on the job. Workers create this work culture in order to confront, resist, or adapt to the constraints of their jobs, as well as to guide and interpret social relations on the job. Today, computers, smartphones, and tablets offer additional opportunities for workers to enhance or degrade their work culture. Some organizations have sought to control offensive communications so that workers will not be exposed to a hostile work environment brought about by colleagues, but such control has raised significant privacy issues (see this chapter's “Sociology and Social Policy” box).

Is the informal side of bureaucracy good or bad? Should it be controlled or encouraged? Two schools of thought have emerged with regard to these questions. One approach emphasizes control of informal groups in order to ensure greater worker productivity. By contrast, the other school of thought asserts that informal groups should be nurtured because such networks may serve as a means of communication and cohesion among individuals. Large organizations would be unable to function without strong informal norms and relations among participants.

Informal networks thrive in contemporary organizations because people can communicate with one another continually without ever having to engage in face-to-face interaction. The need to meet at the water fountain or the copy machine in order to exchange information is long gone: Workers now have an opportunity to tell one another—and higher-ups, as well—what they think.

rationality

the process by which traditional methods of social organization, characterized by informality and spontaneity, are gradually replaced by efficiently administered formal rules and procedures.

ideal type

an abstract model that describes the recurring characteristics of some phenomenon.

informal side of a bureaucracy

those aspects of participants' day-to-day activities and interactions that ignore, bypass, or do not correspond with the official rules and procedures of the bureaucracy.



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FIGURE 5.12 How do people use this informal “grapevine” to spread information? Is it faster than the organization’s official channels of communication? Is it more or less accurate than official channels?

Problems of Bureaucracies

The characteristics that make up Weber’s “rational” model of bureaucracy have a dark side that has frequently given this type of organization a bad name. Three of the major problems of bureaucracies are (1) inefficiency and rigidity, (2) resistance to change, and (3) perpetuation of race, class, and gender inequalities.

Inefficiency and Rigidity Bureaucracies experience inefficiency and rigidity at both the upper and lower levels of the organization. The self-protective behavior of officials at the top may render the organization inefficient. One type of self-protective behavior is the monopolization of information in order to maintain control over subordinates and outsiders. Information is a valuable commodity in organizations, and those persons in positions of authority guard information because it is a source of power for them—others cannot “second-guess” their decisions without access to relevant (and often “confidential”) information.

When those at the top tend to use their power and authority to monopolize information, they also fail to communicate with workers at the lower levels. As a result, they are often unaware of potential problems facing the

organization and of high levels of worker frustration. Bureaucratic regulations are written in far greater detail than is necessary in order to ensure that almost all conceivable situations are covered. **Goal displacement** occurs when the rules become an end in themselves rather than a means to an end, and organizational survival becomes more important than achievement of goals (Merton, 1968).

Inefficiency and rigidity occur at the lower levels of the organization as well. Workers often engage in *ritualism*; that is, they become most concerned with “going through the motions” and “following the rules.” According to Robert K. Merton (1968), the term **bureaucratic personality** describes those workers who are more concerned with following correct procedures than they are with getting the job done correctly. Such workers are usually able to handle routine situations effectively but are frequently incapable of handling a unique problem or an emergency. Thorstein Veblen (1967/1899) used the term *trained incapacity* to characterize situations in which workers have become so highly specialized or have been given such fragmented jobs to do that they are unable to come up with creative solutions to problems. Workers who have reached this point also tend to experience bureaucratic alienation—they really do not care what is happening around them.

Resistance to Change Once bureaucratic organizations are created, they tend to resist change. This resistance not only makes bureaucracies virtually impossible to eliminate but also contributes to bureaucratic enlargement. Because of the assumed relationship between size and importance, officials tend to press for larger budgets and more staff and office space. To justify growth, administrators and managers must come up with more tasks for workers to perform.

Resistance to change may also lead to incompetence. Based on organizational policy, bureaucracies tend to promote people from within the organization. As a consequence, a person who performs satisfactorily in one position is promoted to a higher level in the organization. Eventually, people reach a level that is beyond their knowledge, experience, and capabilities.

Perpetuation of Race, Class, and Gender Inequalities Some bureaucracies perpetuate inequalities of race, class, and gender because this form of organizational structure creates a specific type of work or learning environment. This structure was typically created for middle-class and upper-middle-class white men, who for many years were the predominant organizational participants.

For people of color, *entry* into a dominant white bureaucratic organization does not equal actual *integration*. Instead, many have experienced an internal conflict between the bureaucratic ideals of equal opportunity and fairness and the prevailing norms of discrimination and hostility that exist in some organizations. Research has found that people of color are more adversely affected than dominant-group members by hierarchical bureaucratic structures and exclusion from informal networks.

Like racial inequality, social-class divisions may be perpetuated in bureaucracies. The theory of a “dual labor market” has been developed to explain this situation. Middle- and upper-middle-class employees are more likely to have careers characterized by higher wages, more job security, and opportunities for advancement. By contrast, poor and working-class employees work in occupations characterized by low wages, lack of job security, and few opportunities for promotion. The “dual economy” not only reflects but may also perpetuate people’s current class position. Conflict theorists point out that persons in the lowest-wage and highest-potential-for-injury jobs, such as agricultural harvesters and other seasonal laborers, are among the workers most harmed by the presence of a dual economy and its role in perpetuating race-, gender-, and class-based inequalities in the United States and other nations (■ Figure 5.13).

Gender inequalities are also perpetuated in bureaucracies. Women in traditionally male organizations may feel more visible and experience greater performance pressure. They may also find it harder to gain credibility in management positions.

Inequality in organizations has many consequences. People who lack opportunities for integration and advancement tend to be pessimistic and to have lower self-esteem. Believing that they have few opportunities, they may resign themselves to staying put and surviving at that level. By contrast, those who enjoy full access to organizational opportunities tend to have high aspirations and high self-esteem. They often feel loyalty to the organization and typically see their job as a means for mobility and growth.

Bureaucracy and Oligarchy

Why do a small number of leaders at the top make all the important organizational decisions? According to German political sociologist Robert Michels (1949/1911), all organizations encounter the *iron law of oligarchy*—the tendency to become a bureaucracy ruled by the few. His central idea was that those who control bureaucracies not only wield power but also have an interest in retaining their power. For example, formal and informal political party leaders often do not want to relinquish their control over the party because they are able to influence who runs for public office and how campaigns are conducted. Officials elected to Congress frequently choose to serve multiple terms in office because it provides them with the opportunity to become more involved not only in service to their country but also in bureaucratic power. Some members of Congress have served more than half a century as elected officials (Manning, 2011).



Mark Elias/Bloomberg/Getty Images

FIGURE 5.13 According to conflict theorists, members of the capitalist class benefit from the work of laborers such as the immigrant workers shown here, who are harvesting strawberries at a large agricultural farm in Florida. How do low wages and lack of job security contribute to class-based inequalities in the United States?

Michels found that the hierarchical structures of bureaucracies and oligarchies go hand in hand. On the one hand, power may be concentrated in a few people because rank-and-file members must inevitably delegate a certain amount of decision-making authority to their leaders. Leaders have access to information that other members do not have, and they have “clout,” which they may use to protect their own interests. On the other hand, oligarchy may result when individuals have certain outstanding qualities that make it possible for them to manage, if not control, others. The members choose to look to their leaders for direction; the leaders are strongly motivated to maintain the power and privileges that go with their leadership positions.

Are there limits to the iron law of oligarchy? The leaders in most organizations do not have unlimited power. Divergent groups within a large-scale organization often compete for power, and informal networks can be used to “go behind the backs” of leaders. In addition, members routinely challenge leaders’ decisions, and sometimes they (or the organization’s governing board) can remove leaders when they are not pleased with the leaders’ actions.

goal displacement

a process that occurs in organizations when the rules become an end in themselves rather than a means to an end, and organizational survival becomes more important than achievement of goals.

bureaucratic personality

a psychological construct that describes those workers who are more concerned with following correct procedures than they are with getting the job done correctly.

iron law of oligarchy

according to Robert Michels, the tendency of bureaucracies to be ruled by a few people.

Technological and Social Change in the Workplace: BYOD?

What if I take my own smartphone or tablet to the office so that I can do both company and personal work on it? Can my employer demand to see what's on my mobile device? Can the IT people wipe it clean or take the device from me if I am no longer employed there?

—Frequently asked questions by persons who are employed at companies with BYOD ("bring your own device") policies

Do employers really have the right to monitor everything that their employees do at work? Are company-owned computers different from worker-owned digital devices that employees bring to work and use for business and personal activities? Generally speaking, the majority of U.S. companies monitor employee use of company-owned computers and other electronic devices. These employers assert that they have the right to engage in surveillance because it may be necessary for their own protection. Employers state that they own the computer network and the monitors, pay for the Internet service, and pay the employees to spend time on company business. Unchecked Internet activity can expose a company's network and systems to malware and other intrusions that the company otherwise might not encounter. As a result, many employers take the position that First Amendment (privacy) rights are left at the office door when a person agrees to work for a private employer. In most instances, courts have upheld monitoring of employees by employers (see, e.g., *Bourke v. Nissan*, *Smyth v. Pillsbury*, and *Shoars v. Epson*).

But what about situations in which employees bring their own mobile devices so that they can work virtually

anywhere? What if employees use these devices for both personal and work purposes? Loss of the devices or loss of information stored on the devices may pose a significant security risk for the organization, and more companies have established policies that provide them with access to employees' mobile devices if they are used at work. New laws are emerging as more employees use their own mobile devices; however, laws typically vary from state to state and are not necessarily the same for all employers. Rules for government employees may differ from those for private companies, and highly regulated industries such as health care and finance may have more stringent rules. As well, employees are encouraged to think about whether they actually want to use their own personal electronic devices at work if doing so would grant other people access to their personal lives through their email, photos, social media sites, and other "private" information posted online.

Sociologically speaking, what is the bottom line here? New technologies necessitate change in social policy and law to address issues such as the meaning of privacy in the workplace. There are valid arguments for surveillance to create adequate security, but there are also valid arguments against invasion of privacy. Employees should have a reasonable expectation of privacy—a reasonable belief that neither other workers nor employers are prying into their private lives. Organizations should make employees and others aware of surveillance policies, and this is what *endpoint security* in businesses suggests: Be forthright with people and let everyone know what is being tracked and why. Use employee handbooks, orientation sessions, and updated online information to keep employees informed about how and when behavior might be monitored. Visit the Privacy Rights Clearinghouse website where a wide variety of information is available, including breaches as a result of hacking, theft, loss of a computer, or a phishing event are reported. What do you think about this? Would you prefer to keep your own mobile devices separate from the workplace, or do you think it would be more convenient to have everything available on one digital device?



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Do you think that employers should have the right to monitor everything that their employees do on company-owned computers?

Reflect & Analyze

Are you concerned about privacy in your own life? Should businesses and colleges have the right to monitor our digital communications? If so, how should they go about this process?

Alternative Forms of Organization

Many organizations have sought new and innovative ways to organize work more efficiently than the traditional hierarchical model.

Humanizing Bureaucracy

In the early 1980s there was a movement in the United States to *humanize bureaucracy*—to establish an organizational environment that develops rather than impedes human resources. More humane bureaucracies are characterized by (1) less rigid hierarchical structures and greater sharing of power and responsibility by all participants, (2) encouragement of participants to share their ideas and try new approaches to problem solving, and (3) efforts to reduce the number of people in dead-end jobs, train people in needed skills and competencies, and help people meet outside family responsibilities while still receiving equal treatment inside the organization (Kanter, 1983, 1985, 1993/1977). However, this movement has been overshadowed by globalization and the perceived strengths of systems of organizing work in other nations, such as Japan.

Organizational Structure in Japan, Russia, and India

For several decades the Japanese model of organization was widely praised for its innovative structure because it focused on lifetime employment and company loyalty. Although the practice of lifetime employment has largely been replaced by the concept of long-term employment, many workers in Japan have higher levels of job security than do U.S. workers. According to advocates of the Japanese system, this model encourages worker loyalty and a high level of productivity. Managers move through various parts of the organization and acquire technical knowledge about the workings of many aspects of the corporation, unlike their U.S. counterparts, who tend to become highly specialized. Unlike top managers in the United States who have given themselves pay raises and bonuses even when their companies were financially strapped, many Japanese managers have taken pay cuts under similar circumstances. Japanese management is characterized as being people oriented, taking a long-term view, and having a culture that focuses on *how* work gets done rather than on the result alone.

In the second decade of the twenty-first century, the Japanese organization is often based on a management style where information flows from the bottom to the top. As a result, senior managers serve in a supervisory capacity, rather than taking a “hands-on” approach, and policies usually originate at middle organizational levels and then are passed upward for senior managers’ approval. According to analysts, this approach is beneficial because the same persons responsible for implementing policies are the ones who have an active role in initially shaping the rules, policies, and procedures (Bizshifts-Trends, 2011).

In the Japanese organization, managers are expected to be “father figures” and create an environment in which groups can succeed and goals can be met (■ Figure 5.14). Effective leadership is not based on individual personality or a dictatorial manner, and there is disapproval for those who appear to be overly ambitious.

Unlike Japanese organizational structure and management style, organizations in Russia and India are more likely to be hierarchical, centralized, and highly directive. Most organizations also have a “top-down” approach in which chief executives or the highest leaders issue orders for subordinates to follow, and very little consultation takes place with persons in the lower sectors. Leaders who allow too much participation in organizational decision making are often viewed as weak and indecisive. However, middle managers who have privileged access to top elites often become more powerful managers than managers who lack such access. Looking specifically at India, many organizations are family-owned businesses that are tightly controlled across generations; however, there are indications that Western management styles have become more prevalent in that nation as the children and grandchildren of company founders have increasingly been educated in universities in the United States or other high-income nations.

What can we learn by examining alternative organizational structures in other countries? We can see that all organizations are not established on the same premises about how leadership should operate and how decisions should be made. We can also see that different types of leadership affect how organizations will go about their tasks. Some leadership styles are more democratic (managers delegate authority to subordinates in the decision-making process), others are more autocratic (decisions are made solely by those at the top of the hierarchy), and others are more participatory. Finally, we can see that cultural differences do have an important effect on how organizations operate and how leaders think and act (Bizshift-Trends, 2011).

Looking Ahead: Social Change and Organizations in the Future

What is the best organizational structure for the future? Of course, this question is difficult to answer because it requires the ability to predict economic, political, and social conditions. Nevertheless, we can make several observations.

Socially Sustainable Organizations

First, organizations have been affected by growing social inequality in the United States and other nations because of heightening differences between high- and low-income population segments. Having socially sustainable organizations is of increasing importance because



TWPhoto/Corbis News/Corbis

FIGURE 5.14 The Japanese model of organization—including planned group-exercise sessions for employees—has become a part of the workplace in many nations. Would it be a positive change if more workplace settings, such as the one shown here, were viewed as an extension of the family? Why or why not?

television, the Internet, and international travel have made people more aware of the wide disparities in the resources and power of “haves” and “have-nots” both within a single country and across nations.

The term *socially sustainable organizations* is used here to refer to those organizations that take into account the social effects of organizational activities on workers and other persons in the community, the nation, and sometimes the world. Researchers have shown how organizations interact with their physical environments and how they may produce problems such as pollution and environmental degradation. But the focus of the socially sustainable organizational approach is more on the human and social environment and what organizations can do to sustain and sometimes enhance those aspects of the environment that are not strictly physical or biological. As a result of emphasizing the social sustainability factor, organizations can be developed that are both economically efficient and as equitable as possible.

Some organizational and management analysts suggest that more attention should be paid to the “stakeholders” of an organization. Stakeholder theory is

based on the assumption that organizations and their managers must focus on morals and values in the goal-setting and decision-making processes. For example, at a college or university, stakeholders would include (but not be limited to) students, faculty and staff, administrators, alumni, major contributors, boards of regents, suppliers, the community where the school is located, and the society as a whole. The management structure and the morals and values of the institution should reflect the interests of those constituent groups. The goals of the organization should be based on taking into account the interests of these various stakeholders and working toward organizational goals and outcomes that will not only ensure organizational success but also provide the greatest good for the greatest number of stakeholders. Although academic success, winning sports teams, and college financial stability are important in higher education, additional criteria should also be used in assessing the effectiveness and overall output of the college community. In other types of organizations, similar stakeholders can be identified and goals established to meet the needs of various constituencies.

YOU CAN **Make a Difference**

Can Websites and Social Media Help You Become a More Helpful Person?

Civic engagement is much like a sport; you can't jump into a game without understanding the rules and practicing it. But many people think that citizens can get to age 18, jump in, and do well and care about community service.

—Jennifer Bloom, executive director of the Learning Law and Democracy Foundation in St. Paul, Minnesota, explains why it is important for young people to learn more about volunteering and charitable giving (Sparks, 2018)

Did you know that high school and college students are less likely to volunteer in their communities or to give to a charity than they were fifteen or twenty years ago?

According to research by the University of Maryland's Do Good Institute, volunteering has declined not only among young people but also across every age category. At the same time, however, individuals still want to "do good" for other people, particularly considering the numerous mass shootings and natural disasters like hurricanes, floods, and wildfires that we continue to experience as a nation. What researchers are puzzled about is how to get people to participate in volunteer activities on an everyday basis, such as when a major tragic event has not recently occurred.

Here's where online communications through websites and social media come into play. Websites such as VolunteerMatch.org help connect millions of people of all ages with organizations and good causes where they can benefit other people and, in turn, help themselves. To quote from VolunteerMatch.org:

By donating even a few hours every week or month to a nonprofit, a volunteer can learn new skills, improve his or her portfolio or resumé, and even prepare to take on more of a leadership role at a job. Studies also show that **volunteering can improve your health**, reduce stress, put you in a good mood, and boost self-esteem. (Matthews, 2018)

As we attempt to find ways to make a difference in our nation, can websites and social media successfully inspire us to get active in the real world? It seems that the answer is a resounding yes. Worldwide, a new generation of volunteer is being recruited through the power of the media and social networking. Why not explore your favorite social networking site and your school's volunteer information system to learn more about available opportunities where you might share your time and resources with other people in your community and around the world?

Globalization, Technology, and "Smart Working"

Second, *globalization* is the key word for management and change in many organizations, and the use of technology is intricately linked with performing flexible, mobile work anywhere in the world. Based on the assumption that organizations must respond to a rapidly changing environment or they will not thrive, several twenty-first-century organizational models are based on the need to relegate traditional organizational structure to dinosaur status and to move ahead with structures that fully use technology and focus on the need to communicate more effectively. As the pace of communication has increased dramatically and information overload has become prevalent, the leaders of organizations are seeking new ways in which to more efficiently manage their organizations and to be ahead of change, rather than merely adapting to change after it occurs.

One recent approach is referred to as "smart working," which is based on the assumption that innovation is crucial and that organizational leaders must be able to use the talents and energies of the people who work with them. At one level, "smart working" refers to "anytime, anywhere" ways of work that have become prevalent because

of communications technologies such as smartphones and computers. However, another level focuses on the ways in which smart working makes it possible for people to have flexibility and autonomy in where, when, and how they work (chiefexecutive.com, 2010). According to one management specialist:

It turns out that the sort of collaborative, challenging work with potential for learning and personal development that people find satisfying is exactly the sort of work needed to adapt to current turbulent global operating conditions. Smart working is an outcome of designing organizational systems that are good for business and good for people. (chiefexecutive.com, 2010)

From this perspective, organizations must adapt to change; empower all organizational participants to become involved in collaboration, problem solving, and innovation; and create a work environment that people find engaging and that inspires them to give their best to the organization (■ Figure 5.15).

Exactly how these organizations might look is not fully clear, although some analysts suggest that corporations such as Google, Microsoft, and other high-tech companies have



Dhiraj Singh/Bloomberg/Getty Images

FIGURE 5.15 “Smart working” assumes that innovation is crucial, and that people should have flexibility in where, when, and how they work. How do nontraditional office and leisure spaces within the workplace, such as this recreation area where workers take time to relax and enjoy a game of air hockey, reflect the idea of smart working?

actively sought to redefine organizational culture and environment by being responsive to employees, customers, and other stakeholders. Although management continues to exist, the distinction between managers and the managed becomes less prevalent, and the idea that management knowledge will be everyone’s responsibility becomes more predominant. Emphasis is also placed on the importance of improving communication and on acquiring the latest technologies to make this process even faster, more secure, and more efficient. Overall, there is a focus on change and the assumption that people in an organization should be change agents, not individuals who merely respond to change after it occurs.

Ultimately, everyone has a stake in seeing that organizations operate in an effective, humane manner and that opportunities are widely available to all people regardless of race, gender, class, or age. Workers and students alike can benefit from organizational environments that make it possible for people to explore their joint interests without fear of losing their privacy or being pitted against one another in a competitive struggle for advantage. Many organizations offer an opportunity for students and others to work together on meaningful activities that benefit others (see the “You Can Make a Difference” box).

Q&A Chapter Review

Use these questions and answers to check how well you've achieved the learning objectives set out at the beginning of this chapter.

LO1 How do sociologists distinguish among social groups, aggregates, and categories?

Sociologists define a social group as a collection of two or more people who interact frequently, share a sense of belonging, and depend on one another. People who happen to be in the same place at the same time are considered an aggregate. Those who share a similar characteristic are considered a category. Neither aggregates nor categories are considered social groups.

LO2 How do sociologists distinguish among ingroups, outgroups, and reference groups?

Sociologists distinguish between primary groups and secondary groups. Primary groups are small and personal, and members engage in emotion-based interactions over an extended period of time. Secondary groups are larger and more specialized, and members have less personal and more formal, goal-oriented relationships. Sociologists also divide groups into ingroups, outgroups, and reference groups. Ingroups are groups to which we belong and with which we identify. Outgroups are groups we do not belong to or perhaps feel hostile toward. Reference groups are groups that strongly influence people's behavior whether or not they are actually members.

LO3 How does the size of a group shape its members' communication, leadership styles, and pressures to conform?

In small groups, all members know one another and interact simultaneously. In groups with more than three members, communication dynamics change, and members tend to assume specialized tasks. Leadership may be authoritarian, democratic, or laissez-faire. Authoritarian leaders make major decisions and assign tasks to individual members. Democratic leaders encourage discussion and collaborative decision making. Laissez-faire leaders are minimally involved and encourage members to make their own decisions. Groups may have significant influence on members' values, attitudes, and behaviors.

LO4 How does groupthink cause people to respond differently in a group context than they might if they were alone?

Groupthink is the process by which members of a cohesive group arrive at a decision that many individual members privately believe is unwise. In order to maintain ties with a group, many members are willing to conform to norms established and reinforced by group members.

LO5 What are the three types of formal organizations, and how do they differ in membership?

Normative, coercive, and utilitarian organizations are formal organizations. We voluntarily join normative organizations when we want to pursue some common interest or gain personal satisfaction or prestige from being a member. People do not voluntarily become members of coercive organizations—associations that people are forced to join. We voluntarily join utilitarian organizations when they can provide us with a material reward that we seek.

LO6 What are the strengths and weaknesses of bureaucracies in contemporary nations such as the United States?

A bureaucracy is a formal organization characterized by hierarchical authority, division of labor, explicit procedures, and impersonality. According to Max Weber, bureaucracy supplies a rational means of attaining organizational goals because it contributes to coordination and control. A bureaucracy also has an informal structure, which includes the daily activities and interactions that bypass the official rules and procedures. The informal structure may enhance productivity or may be counterproductive to the organization. A bureaucracy may be inefficient, resistant to change, and a vehicle for perpetuating class, race, and gender inequalities.

LO7 What is the iron law of oligarchy, and how does the concept apply to the U.S. government?

The iron law of oligarchy is the tendency to become a bureaucracy ruled by the few. Those who control bureaucracies not only wield power but also have an interest in retaining their power. For example, officials elected to the U.S. Congress frequently choose to serve multiple terms in office because it provides them with the opportunity to become more involved not only in service to their country but also in bureaucratic power.

LO8 What alternative forms of organizations exist today in nations such as Japan?

Some organizations have adopted Japanese management techniques based on long-term employment and company loyalty as alternative forms of bureaucratic structures. Unlike Japanese organizational structure and management style, organizations in Russia and India are more likely to be hierarchical, centralized, and highly directive. More recently, having socially sustainable organizations is becoming increasingly important.

KEY Terms

aggregate 127	expressive leadership 131	laissez-faire leaders 132
authoritarian leaders 132	goal displacement 140	leadership 131
bureaucracy 137	groupthink 134	network 130
bureaucratic personality 140	ideal type 138	outgroup 128
category 127	informal side of a bureaucracy 139	rationality 138
conformity 132	ingroup 128	reference group 129
democratic leaders 132	instrumental leadership 131	small group 130
dyad 130	iron law of oligarchy 141	triad 130

Questions for Critical Thinking

- 1 Who might be more likely to conform in a bureaucracy, those with power or those wanting more power?
- 2 Do the insights gained from Milgram's research on obedience outweigh the elements of deception and stress that were forced on its subjects?
- 3 How would you organize a large-scale organization or company to operate in the twenty-first century?

Answers to **Sociology Quiz**

Personal Privacy in Groups and Organizations

1	False	Deleting an email or other document from a computer does not actually remove it from the computer's memory.
2	False	The Family Educational Right to Privacy Act, which allows a parent or guardian of a student under age 18 to obtain their child's grades, requires the student's consent once he or she has attained age 18.
3	True	In earlier times, telephone numbers called from a company's phone extension can be recorded on a pen register, and this information could be used by the employer to find out how much employees spent talking with clients—or with other people. However, personal smartphones now provide employees with a way to talk to friends, family, and others without being detected by their employer.
4	True	The U.S. Supreme Court has ruled that schools may require students to submit to random drug testing as a condition of participating in extracurricular activities.
5	False	An employer may not engage in video surveillance of its employees in situations where they have a reasonable right of privacy. At least in the absence of a sign warning of such surveillance, employees have this right in company restrooms.
6	False	The Federal Educational Rights and Privacy Act states that Social Security numbers are "personally identifiable information" that may not be released without written consent from the student. Posting grades by Social Security number outside a professor's office door violates this provision unless the student has consented to the number being disclosed.
7	True	Confidential communications made privately to a minister, priest, rabbi, or other religious leader (or to an individual the person reasonably believes to hold such a position) generally cannot be divulged without the consent of the person making the communication. This does not apply when other people are present who are likely to hear the statement.
8	False	An employer cannot ask a medical professional for an employee's medical records, or other information about the individual's health, without written permission from the employee.



Deviance and Crime

6

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- 1 Explain** deviance and how social control helps discourage it.
- 2 Compare** the key functionalist perspectives on deviance.
- 3 Discuss** the perspectives of conflict theorists on deviance and crime.
- 4 Discuss** the perspectives of symbolic interactionists on deviance.
- 5 Explain how** postmodern perspectives on deviance differ from other theoretical approaches, emphasizing Michel Foucault's contributions to the study of deviance and social control.
- 6 Describe** the various categories of crime.
- 7 Explain** why official statistics may not be good indicators of crime rates.
- 8 Describe** the components of the criminal justice system and the goals of punishment.



AP Images/Eric Risberg

SOCIOLOGY & **Everyday Life**

The Carnage from Mass Shootings Just Keeps Going On

August 5, 2019, The White House, Washington, D.C.

PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP: Good morning. My fellow Americans, this morning, our nation is overcome with shock, horror, and sorrow. This weekend, more than 80 people were killed or wounded in two evil attacks.

On Saturday morning, in El Paso, Texas, a wicked man went to a Walmart store, where families were shopping with their loved ones. He shot and murdered 20 people, and injured 26 others, including precious little children.

Then, in the early hours of Sunday morning in Dayton, Ohio, another twisted monster opened fire on a crowded downtown street. He murdered 9 people, including his own sister, and injured 27 others. . .

Now is the time to set destructive partisanship aside—so destructive—and find the courage to answer hatred with unity, devotion, and love. Our future is in our control. America will rise to the challenge. We always have and we always will win. The choice is ours and ours alone. It is not up to the mentally ill monsters; it is up to us . . .

—Excerpt from a speech by President Donald J. Trump about mass shootings in the United States (whitehouse.gov, 2019)



JOEL ANGEL JUAREZ/AFP/Getty Images

The law enforcement officers shown here were responding to a call about an active shooter at a Walmart in El Paso, Texas, where 22 people were killed and many others were injured in an act identified as possible domestic terrorism and a hate crime. Twenty victims died at the scene and two more died shortly thereafter at a local hospital.

Obviously, something is going very wrong in the United States. We have more mass shootings than other high-income nations. President after president ends up making a speech decrying the latest shooting in our nation and stressing that something must be done to end the carnage. Some traumatic U.S. shootings have been in schools, businesses, public buildings, movie theaters, concerts, and even on streets.

How can we explain this? Are we becoming a more violent nation? Where do people look for explanations? They typically turn to multiple sources. Blame is placed on lax gun-control policies, mental illness, divorced parents, violent video games, media glorification of violence and killing, and myriad other possible “causes.” As each new occurrence claims widespread attention for a brief period of time, we look for, and try to prevent, the causes of violent crime. And, of course, we must continue to do this if we have any hope of reducing such violent attacks and other forms of criminal conduct in the future.

Why are violence and crime so interesting to people who study social behavior? Crimes such as mass shootings are of great interest and concern because of the harm that such incidents inflict not only on victims and their families but also on entire communities, the nation, and the larger global population, which is linked through instantaneous communications and social media networks.

In this chapter we look at deviance and crime to learn more about sociological perspectives on deviance, the nature and extent of crime in

the United States, and how the criminal justice system operates. Before reading on, take the “Sociology and Everyday Life” quiz on violence and guns in the United States to see how much you know about the subject. ●

What Is Deviance?

Deviance is any behavior, belief, or condition that violates significant social norms in the society or group in which it occurs. We are most familiar with *behavioral* deviance, based on a person’s intentional or inadvertent actions. For example, a person may engage in intentional deviance by drinking too much or committing a bank robbery, or participate in inadvertent deviance by losing money in a casino or laughing at a funeral.

Although we usually think of deviance as a type of behavior, people may be regarded as deviant if they express a radical or unusual *belief system*. Members of far-right-wing or far-left-wing political groups may be considered deviant when their religious or political beliefs become known to people with more conventional cultural beliefs. However, individuals who are considered to be “deviant” by one category of people may be seen as conformists by

How Much Do You Know About Violence and Guns in the United States?

TRUE	FALSE		
T	F	1	The total number of reported violent crimes increases each year in the United States.
T	F	2	Aggravated assaults account for the highest number of violent crimes in the United States.
T	F	3	Firearms are used in more than half of all murders in the United States.
T	F	4	As the U.S. population grows, a continual increase in the rate of property crime is recorded in this country.
T	F	5	The West is the most violent region in the United States.
T	F	6	The presence of more guns tends to indicate a likelihood of more homicides.
T	F	7	States with the weakest gun-control laws experience higher rates of gun deaths.
T	F	8	Each year the rate of violent victimization reported to the police increases.

Answers can be found at the end of the chapter.

another group. For example, when people who believe in Bigfoot (also known as Sasquatch) are surrounded by other like-minded individuals, they think of their beliefs as normal and gain a personal sense of belonging to the group (■ Figure 6.1). Sociologist Carson Mencken observed a group of Bigfoot hunters and concluded that they did not see themselves as deviant at all but actually treated one another with the kind of respect that they did not receive from nonbelievers. Instead of seeing themselves as deviant, searching for Bigfoot was akin to a religion for them.

In addition to behaving in a specific way and holding certain beliefs, individuals may be regarded as deviant if they possess a specific *condition* or *characteristic*. A wide range of conditions and characteristics have been identified by others as “deviant,” including being obese, having excessive tattoos or body piercings, or being diagnosed with certain kinds of illnesses or diseases (■ Figure 6.2). A stigma is often attached to a condition, such as obesity, in which blame may be placed on the patient because some people believe that the problem was caused by the individual’s behavior. Chapter 4 defines a *stigma* as any physical or social attribute or sign that so devalues a person’s social identity that it disqualifies the person from full social acceptance (Goffman, 1963b). Based on this definition, the stigmatized

person has a “spoiled identity” as a result of being negatively evaluated by others (Goffman, 1963b). To avoid or reduce stigma, many people seek to conceal the characteristic or condition that might lead to stigmatization.

Who Defines Deviance?

Are some behaviors, beliefs, and conditions inherently deviant? In commonsense thinking, deviance is often viewed as inherent in certain kinds of behavior or people. For sociologists, however, deviance is related to social situations and social structures rather than to the behavior of individual actors. As sociologist Kai T. Erikson (1964: 11) explains,

Deviance is not a property inherent in certain forms of behavior; it is a property conferred upon these forms by the audiences which directly or indirectly witness them. *The critical variable in the study of*

deviance

any behavior, belief, or condition that violates significant social norms in the society or group in which it occurs.



William Brooks/Alamy Stock Photo

FIGURE 6.1 Searching for Bigfoot—allegedly a large, hairy, bipedal humanoid—is a hobby for some people. Others believe that these hunters are deviant persons deluded by a myth. Some sociological studies have found that Bigfoot-seekers do not perceive themselves as deviant at all. What do you think?

deviance, then, is the social audience rather than the individual actor, since it is the audience which eventually determines whether or not any episode of behavior or any class of episodes is labeled deviant.
(emphasis added)

Based on this statement, we can conclude that deviance is *relative*—that is, an act becomes deviant when it is socially defined as such. Definitions of deviance vary widely from place to place, from time to time, and from group to group, as we have seen in the case of Bigfoot hunters. Clothing styles are another example: What some people wear in public today might have landed them in jail in their grandparents' or great-grandparents' day.

Deviant behavior also varies in *degree of seriousness*, ranging from mild transgressions of folkways to more serious infringements of mores to quite serious violations of the law. Have you skipped class or pretended that you were sick so that you would have more time to complete a homework assignment or study for an exam? If so, you have violated a folkway. Others probably view your infraction as relatively minor; at most, you might receive a lower grade. Violations of mores—such as falsifying a college application or cheating on an examination—are viewed as more serious infractions and are punishable by stronger sanctions, such as academic probation or expulsion. Some forms of deviant behavior violate criminal law, which defines the behaviors that society labels as criminal. A **crime** is behavior that violates criminal law and is punishable with fines, jail terms, and/or other negative sanctions. Crimes range from minor offenses (such as traffic violations; see ■ Figure 6.3) to major offenses (such as murder). A subcategory, **juvenile delinquency**, refers to a violation of law or the commission

of a status offense by young people. The legal concept of juvenile delinquency includes not only crimes but also *status offenses*, which are illegal only when committed by younger people (such as cutting school or running away from home).

What Is Social Control?

Societies not only have norms and laws that govern acceptable behavior; they also have various mechanisms to control people's behavior. **Social control** refers to the systematic practices that social groups develop in order to encourage conformity to norms, rules, and laws and to discourage deviance. Social control mechanisms may be either internal or external. *Internal social control* takes place through the socialization process: Individuals *internalize* societal



Andrey Arkusha/Shutterstock.com

FIGURE 6.2 Do you consider this man's appearance to be deviant? In what types of groups might he be considered a conformist?



Ariel Skelley/Getty Images

FIGURE 6.3 How does a traffic ticket for speeding differ in degree of seriousness from other driving-related offenses such as a parking violation?

norms and values that prescribe how people should behave and then follow those norms and values in their everyday lives. By contrast, *external social control* involves the use of negative sanctions that proscribe certain behaviors and set forth punishments for rule-breakers and nonconformists. In contemporary societies the criminal justice system, which includes the police, the courts, and the prisons, is the primary mechanism of external social control.

If most actions deemed deviant do little or no direct harm to society or its members, why is social control so important to groups and societies? Why is the same belief or action punished in one group or society and not in another? These questions pose interesting theoretical concerns and research topics for sociologists and criminologists who examine issues pertaining to law, social control, and the criminal justice system. **Criminology** is the systematic study of crime and the criminal justice system, including the police, courts, and prisons.

The primary interest of sociologists and criminologists is not questions of how crime and criminals can best be controlled but rather social control as a social product. Sociologists do not judge certain kinds of behavior or people as being “good” or “bad.” Instead, they attempt to determine what types of behavior are defined as deviant, who does the defining, how and why people become deviants, and how society deals with deviants. Although sociologists have developed a number of theories to explain deviance and crime, no one perspective is a comprehensive explanation of all deviance. Each theory provides a different lens through which we can examine aspects of deviant behavior.

Functionalist Perspectives on Deviance

As we have seen in previous chapters, functionalists focus on societal stability and the ways in which various parts of society contribute to the whole. According to functionalists,

a certain amount of deviance contributes to the smooth functioning of society.

What Causes Deviance, and Why Is It Functional for Society?

Sociologist Emile Durkheim believed that deviance is rooted in societal factors such as rapid social change and lack of social integration among people. As you will recall, Durkheim attributed the social upheaval he saw at the end of the nineteenth century to the shift from mechanical to organic solidarity, which was brought about by rapid industrialization and urbanization. Although many people continued to follow the dominant morals (norms, values, and laws) as best they could, rapid social change contributed to *anomie*—a social condition in which people experience a sense of futility because social norms are weak, absent, or conflicting. According to Durkheim, as social integration (bonding and community involvement) decreased, deviance and crime increased. However, from his perspective, this was not altogether bad because he believed that deviance has positive social functions in terms of its consequences. For Durkheim (1964a/1895), deviance is a natural and inevitable part of all societies. Likewise, contemporary functionalist theorists suggest that deviance is universal because it serves three important functions:

1. *Deviance clarifies rules.* By punishing deviant behavior, society reaffirms its commitment to the rules and clarifies their meaning.
2. *Deviance unites a group.* When deviant behavior is seen as a threat to group solidarity and people unite in opposition to that behavior, their loyalties to society are reinforced.
3. *Deviance promotes social change.* Deviants may violate norms in order to get them changed. For example, acts of *civil disobedience*—including lunch counter sit-ins and bus boycotts—were used in the past to protest and eventually correct injustices such as segregated buses and lunch counters in the South. More recently, organizers of protests and marches such as the 2018 Women’s March when thousands of women marched in Washington, D.C., and engaged in acts of civil

crime

behavior that violates criminal law and is punishable with fines, jail terms, and/or other negative sanctions.

juvenile delinquency

a violation of law or the commission of a status offense by young people.

social control

systematic practices that social groups develop in order to encourage conformity to norms, rules, and laws and to discourage deviance.

criminology

the systematic study of crime and the criminal justice system, including the police, courts, and prisons.

disobedience (such as occupying a Senate office building) to protest the maltreatment of children who were separated from their parents as migrating families attempted to enter the United States from the Mexican border (Simon and Pitofsky, 2018).

Functionalists acknowledge that deviance may also be dysfunctional for society. If too many people violate the norms, everyday existence may become unpredictable, chaotic, and even violent. If even a few people commit acts that are so violent that they threaten the survival of a society, then deviant acts move into the realm of the criminal and even the unthinkable. One example that stands out in everyone's mind is terrorist attacks around the world and the fear that remains constantly present as a result.

Although there is a wide array of contemporary functionalist theories regarding deviance and crime, many of these theories focus on social structure. For this reason, the first theory we discuss is referred to as a structural functionalist approach. It describes the relationship between the society's economic structure and why people might engage in various forms of deviant behavior.

Strain Theory: Goals and Means to Achieve Them

Modifying Durkheim's (1964a/1895) concept of *anomie*, sociologist Robert K. Merton (1938, 1968) developed strain theory. According to *strain theory*, people feel strain when they are exposed to cultural goals that they are unable to obtain because they do not have access to culturally approved means of achieving those goals. The goals may be material possessions and money; the approved means may include an education and jobs. When denied legitimate access to these goals, some people seek access through deviant means.

Merton identified five ways in which people adapt to cultural goals and approved ways of achieving them: conformity, innovation, ritualism, retreatism, and rebellion (see ■ Table 6.1). According to Merton, *conformity*

occurs when people accept culturally approved goals and pursue them through approved means. Persons who want to achieve success through conformity work hard, save their money, and so on. Even people who find that they are blocked from achieving a high level of education or a lucrative career may take a lower-paying job and attend school part time, join the military, or seek alternative (but legal) avenues, such as playing the lottery to "strike it rich."

Merton classified the remaining four types of adaptation as deviance:

- *Innovation* occurs when people accept society's goals but adopt disapproved means of achieving them. Innovations for acquiring material possessions or money cover a wide variety of illegal activities, including theft and drug-dealing.
- *Ritualism* occurs when people give up on societal goals but still adhere to the socially approved means of achieving them. Ritualism is the opposite of innovation; persons who cannot obtain expensive material possessions or wealth may nevertheless seek to maintain the respect of others by being a "hard worker" or "good citizen."
- *Retreatism* occurs when people abandon both the approved goals and the approved means of achieving them. Merton included persons such as skid-row alcoholics and drug addicts in this category; however, not all retreatists are destitute. Some may be middle- or upper-income individuals who see themselves as rejecting the conventional trappings of success or the means necessary to acquire them.
- *Rebellion* occurs when people challenge both the approved goals and the approved means for achieving them and advocate an alternative set of goals or means. To achieve their alternative goals, rebels may use violence (such as rioting) or may register their displeasure with society through acts of vandalism or graffiti.

TABLE 6.1 Merton's Strain Theory of Deviance

Mode of Adaptation	Method of Adaptation	Seeks Culture's Goals	Follows Culture's Approved Ways
Conformity	Accepts culturally approved goals; pursues them through culturally approved means	Yes	Yes
Innovation	Accepts culturally approved goals; adopts disapproved means of achieving them	Yes	No
Ritualism	Abandons society's goals but continues to conform to approved means	No	Yes
Retreatism	Abandons both approved goals and the approved means to achieve them	No	No
Rebellion	Challenges both the approved goals and the approved means to achieve them	No—seeks to replace	No—seeks to replace

Opportunity Theory: Access to Illegitimate Opportunities

Expanding on Merton's strain theory, sociologists Richard Cloward and Lloyd Ohlin (1960) suggested that for deviance to occur, people must have access to *illegitimate opportunity structures*—circumstances that provide an opportunity for people to acquire through illegitimate activities what they cannot achieve through legitimate channels. For example, in studies of juvenile gangs, researchers have found that gang members may have insufficient legitimate means to achieve conventional goals of status and wealth but have illegitimate opportunity structures—such as theft, drug-dealing, or robbery—through which they can achieve these goals (■ Figure 6.4). In his classic sociological study of the “Diamonds,” a Chicago street gang whose members are second-generation Puerto Rican youths, sociologist Felix M. Padilla (1993) found that gang membership was linked to the members’ belief that they might reach their aspirations by transforming the gang into a business enterprise. Coco, one of the Diamonds, explains the importance of sticking together in the gang’s income-generating business organization:

We are a group, a community, a family—we have to learn to live together. If we separate, we will never have a chance. We need each other even to make sure that we have a spot for selling our supply [of drugs]. You know, there is people around here, like some opposition, that want to take over your *negocio* [business]. And they think that they can do this very easy. So we stick together, and that makes other people think twice about trying to take over what is yours. In our case, the opposition has never tried messing with our hood, and that’s because they know it’s protected real good by us fellas. (qtd. in Padilla, 1993: 104)

Although Padilla’s study is nearly three decades old, his findings continue to be supported by research, popular culture, and media accounts of how gangs stick together in income-generating business organizations. The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI; 2019) estimates that there are about 33,000 violent street gangs, motorcycle gangs, and prison gangs in the United States. According to the FBI, many of these gangs use violence to control neighborhoods and engage in robbery, drug- and gun-trafficking, prostitution and human-trafficking, and fraud. However, the FBI has discontinued its efforts to maintain exact counts of the number of individuals who are gang members.



A. Ramey/PhotoEdit

FIGURE 6.4 Members of the California group known as the Culver City Boyz typify how gang members use items of clothing and gang signs made with their hands to assert their membership in the group and solidarity with one another. Researchers have found that some gang members may have insufficient legitimate means to achieve conventional goals of status and wealth but have illegitimate opportunity structures through which they can achieve these goals.

Other early research by Cloward and Ohlin (1960) identified three basic gang types—criminal, conflict, and retreatist—that emerge on the basis of what type of illegitimate opportunity structure is available in a specific area. *Criminal gangs* are devoted to theft, extortion, and other illegal means of securing an income. For young men who grow up in a criminal gang, running drug houses and selling drugs on street corners make it possible for them to support themselves and their families as well as purchase material possessions to impress others. By contrast, *conflict gangs* emerge in communities that do not provide either legitimate or illegitimate opportunities. Members of conflict gangs seek to acquire a “rep” (reputation) by fighting over “turf” (territory) and adopting a value system of toughness, courage, and similar qualities. On

strain theory

the proposition that people feel strain when they are exposed to cultural goals that they are unable to obtain because they do not have access to culturally approved means of achieving those goals.

illegitimate opportunity structures

circumstances that provide an opportunity for people to acquire through illegitimate activities what they cannot achieve through legitimate channels.

SOCIOLOGY IN **Global Perspective**

Gangs Around the World: A Growing Problem

- What are gangs and where do they come from?
- What is the U.S. government doing about gangs in this country and worldwide?

For many people, gangs are thought to be associated with urban slums and drug-dealing outlaws in U.S. border towns. However, this perspective provides too limited a view of what actually constitutes gangs today, and it provides little or no explanation of why they exist. Gangs are a universal feature of daily life in cities throughout the world, especially in regions where people believe that they have no other way to deal with poverty, injustice, and racial and ethnic oppression. In sum, demoralized people come to view gangs as a replacement for the government in providing security, needed services, and economic viability. When some people feel demoralized and believe that official channels are doing little or nothing for them, they may create alternative organizational structures—in this case, gangs—to help them adapt to their environment.

One of the most frequently mentioned gangs by U.S. political leaders is MS-13, which was started by Central American immigrants from countries such as El Salvador, Honduras, Guatemala, Mexico, and other Central and South American countries. Members of this gang first arrived in Los Angeles and other California cities, but the FBI reports that these transnational gangs are not only present in almost every state but are also continuing to grow in membership, particularly among younger recruits.

The Trump administration targeted this group because of President Trump's belief that MS-13 is expanding its influence in the United States because of the nation's lax immigration policies. To put the size of MS-13 gangs into perspective, this violent group has about 10,000 members in the United States, a membership of less than 1 percent of all gang memberships. Overall, the FBI (2019) estimates that total U.S. gang membership adds up to about 1.4 million members, comprised of persons in 33,000 violent street gangs, motorcycle gangs, and prison gangs.

To combat gang activity, the Transnational Anti-Gang (TAG) Task Force was created by the U.S. government and located its operations in El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras to investigate and disrupt gang activity in those countries, as well as to prevent gang members from coming to the United States. FBI personnel assigned to TAG also work in U.S. cities to investigate MS-13 and other large street gangs. To learn more about Violent Crime Task Forces and antigang initiatives, visit [fbi.gov](https://www.fbi.gov) and search for "Gangs."

Reflect & Analyze

Which sociological perspectives do you find most useful for explaining why people create or join gangs? Do you believe there are crucial linkages between gang membership and immigration policy? Why or why not?

some Native American reservations, for example, the FBI refers to the growth of gangs and drugs as the "silent crisis in Indian Country" (Keenecke, 2019). Younger people especially are being negatively affected by gang activity. As Devon Spotted War Bonnet, a teenager on the Rosebud Reservation, stated: "I live on the rez; [gang activity] is everywhere. It's just out there—it's easy. I see it every day" (qtd. in Keenecke, 2019).

Unlike criminal and conflict gangs, members of *retreatist gangs* are unable to gain success through legitimate means and are unwilling to do so through illegal ones. As a result, the consumption of drugs is stressed, and addiction is prevalent.

How useful are social structural approaches such as opportunity theory and strain theory in explaining deviant behavior? Although there are weaknesses in these approaches, they focus our attention on one crucial issue: the close association between certain forms of deviance and social class position. If we view gangs as a microcosm

of the larger society, we can see connections between poverty and inequality and larger patterns of crime not only in the United States but also throughout the world (see this chapter's "Sociology in Global Perspective" box).

Conflict Perspectives on Deviance

Who determines what kinds of behavior are deviant or criminal? Different branches of conflict theory offer somewhat divergent answers to this question. One branch emphasizes power as the central factor in defining deviance and crime: People in positions of power maintain their advantage by using the law to protect their interests. Another branch emphasizes the relationship between deviance and capitalism, whereas a third focuses on feminist perspectives and the confluence of race, class, and gender issues in regard to deviance and crime.

Deviance and Power Relations

Conflict theorists who focus on power relations in society suggest that the lifestyles considered deviant by political and economic elites are often defined as illegal. According to this approach, norms and laws are established for the benefit of those in power and do not reflect any absolute standard of right and wrong. As a result, the activities of poor and lower-income individuals are more likely to be defined as criminal than those of persons from middle- and upper-income backgrounds. The media and political leaders often contribute to this perception by frequently describing African Americans, and especially African American perpetrators, as “lazy” and “criminal” (Leonhardt and Philbrick, 2018).

Moreover, the criminal justice system is more focused on, and is less forgiving of, deviant and criminal behavior engaged in by people in specific categories. For example, research shows that young, single, urban males are more likely to be perceived as criminals and receive stricter sentences in courts (Rehavi and Starr, 2012). One study of racial disparity in federal criminal sentencing found that African Americans receive sentences that are almost 10 percent longer than those received by comparable white Americans arrested for the same offenses (Rehavi and Starr, 2012). This finding may be partly attributed to the fact that prosecutors are almost twice as likely to file charges against African Americans that carry a mandatory minimum sentence. This is especially true in drug-offense cases. By contrast, another study found that black–white disparity in sentencing of offenders is less frequent in courts in those counties where more African American lawyers practice, suggesting that having representation by a person from one’s own racial or ethnic category may bring greater scrutiny to criminal proceedings (King, Johnson, and McGeever, 2010).

Deviance and Capitalism

A second branch of conflict theory—Marxist/critical theory—views deviance and crime as a function of the capitalist economic system. Although the early economist and social thinker Karl Marx wrote very little about deviance and crime, many of his ideas are found in a critical approach that has emerged from earlier Marxist and radical perspectives on criminology. The critical approach is based on the assumption that the laws and the criminal justice system protect the power and privilege of the capitalist class. As discussed in Chapter 1, Marx based his critique of capitalism on the inherent conflict that he believed existed between the capitalists (bourgeoisie) and the working class (proletariat). In a capitalist society, social institutions (such as law, politics, and education, which make up the superstructure) legitimize existing class inequalities and maintain the capitalists’ superior position in the class structure. According to Marx, capitalism produces haves and have-nots, who engage in different forms of deviance and crime.

According to sociologist Richard Quinney (2001/1974), people with economic and political power define as criminal any behavior that threatens their own interests. The powerful use laws to control those who are without power. For example, drug laws enacted early in the twentieth century were actively enforced in an effort to control immigrant workers, especially the Chinese, who were being exploited by the railroads and other industries (Tracy, 1980). By contrast, antitrust legislation passed at about the same time was seldom enforced against large corporations owned by prominent families such as the Rockefellers, Carnegies, and Mellons. Having antitrust laws on the books merely shored up the government’s legitimacy by making it appear responsive to public concerns about big business.

In sum, the Marxist/critical approach argues that criminal law protects the interests of the affluent and powerful. The way that laws are written and enforced benefits the capitalist class by ensuring that individuals at the bottom of the social class structure do not infringe on the property or threaten the safety of those at the top (Reiman and Leighton, 2010). However, others assert that critical theorists have not shown that powerful economic and political elites actually manipulate lawmaking and law enforcement for their own benefit. Rather, people of all classes share a consensus about the criminality of certain acts. For example, laws that prohibit murder, rape, and armed robbery protect not only middle- and upper-income people but also low-income people, who are frequently the victims of such violent crimes.

Feminist Approaches

Do you think that theories developed to explain male behavior can be used to understand female deviance and crime? According to feminist scholars, the answer is no. An interest in women and deviance developed in 1975 when two books—Freda Adler’s *Sisters in Crime* and Rita James Simons’s *Women and Crime*—declared that women’s crime rates were going to increase significantly as a result of the women’s liberation movement. Although this so-called *emancipation theory* of female crime has been refuted by subsequent analysts, Adler’s and Simons’s works encouraged feminist scholars (both women and men) to examine more closely the relationship among gender, deviance, and crime. More recently, feminist scholars have developed theories and conducted research to fill the void in our knowledge about gender and crime. For example, in a study by Janet Davidson and Meda Chesney-Lind (2009), the authors conclude that sociobiographical variables such as a history of physical and sexual abuse are more predictive of female criminality than of male criminality. Although there is no single feminist perspective on deviance and crime, three schools of thought have emerged.

Why do women engage in deviant behavior and commit crimes? According to the *liberal feminist approach*, women’s deviance and crime are a rational response to the gender discrimination that women experience in families and



AP Images/LM Otero

FIGURE 6.5 This young woman is being arrested after a local prostitution ring was broken up by Dallas police officers. Which feminist theory of women's crime might best explain the offenses of women like the one pictured here?

the workplace. From this view, lower-income and minority women typically have fewer opportunities not only for education and good jobs but also for “high-end” criminal endeavors.

By contrast, the *radical feminist approach* views the cause of women's crime as originating in patriarchy (male domination over females). From this view, arrests and prosecution for crimes such as prostitution reflect our society's sexual double standard whereby it is acceptable for a man to pay for sex but unacceptable for a woman to accept money for such services. Although state laws usually view both the female prostitute and the male customer as violating the law, in most states the woman is far more likely than the man to be arrested, brought to trial, convicted, and sentenced.

The third school of feminist thought, the *Marxist (socialist) feminist approach*, is based on the assumption that women are exploited by both capitalism and patriarchy. Because many females have relatively low-wage jobs (if any) and few economic resources, crimes such as prostitution and shoplifting become a means to earn money or acquire consumer goods. However, instead of freeing women from their problems, prostitution institutionalizes women's dependence on men and makes women more vulnerable to criminal prosecution. Lower-income women are further victimized by the fact that they are often the targets of violent

acts by lower-class males, who perceive themselves as being powerless in the capitalist economic system.

These approaches make a contribution to our understanding of deviance and crime by focusing on gender as a central concern; however, some theories neglect the centrality of race, ethnicity, class, and sexual orientation in deviance, crime, and the criminal justice system (■ Figure 6.5).

Approaches Focusing on the Interaction of Race, Class, and Gender

Some studies have focused on the simultaneous effects of race, class, and gender on deviant behavior and crime. Multiracial feminist approaches have examined how the intersecting systems of race, class, and gender act as “structuring forces” that affect how people act, what opportunities they have available, and how their behavior is socially defined. Examples include how the legal system responds to individual offenders based on their social location in hierarchies based on race, class, and/or gender. Some studies have found, for instance, that young, unemployed African American (black) and Hispanic men are treated differently in sentencing decisions by judges and juries based on their race, ethnicity, gender, and age. Other work has also been conducted using an intersectional approach to learn more about domestic violence and other crimes in society.

Symbolic Interactionist Perspectives on Deviance

Symbolic interactionists focus on *social processes*, such as how people develop a self-concept and learn conforming behavior through socialization. According to this approach, deviance is learned in the same way as conformity—through interaction with others. Although there are a number of symbolic interactionist perspectives on deviance, we examine four major approaches—differential association and differential reinforcement theories, rational choice theory, control theory, and labeling theory.

Differential Association Theory and Differential Reinforcement Theory

How do people learn deviant behavior through their interactions with others? According to sociologist Edwin Sutherland (1939), people learn the necessary techniques and the motives, drives, rationalizations, and attitudes of deviant behavior from people with whom they associate. *Differential association theory* states that people have a greater tendency to deviate from societal norms when they frequently associate with individuals who are more favorable toward deviance than conformity. From this approach, criminal behavior is learned within intimate personal groups such as one's family and peer groups.

Differential association theory contributes to our knowledge of how deviant behavior reflects the individual's learned techniques, values, attitudes, motives, and rationalizations. It calls attention to the fact that criminal activity is more likely to occur when a person has frequent, intense, and long-lasting interactions with others who violate the law. However, it does not explain why many individuals who have been heavily exposed to people who violate the law still engage in conventional behavior most of the time.

Criminologist Ronald Akers (1998) has combined differential association theory with elements of psychological learning theory to create *differential reinforcement theory*, which suggests that both deviant behavior and conventional behavior are learned through the same social processes. Akers starts with the fact that people learn to evaluate their own behavior through interactions with significant others. If the persons and groups that a particular individual considers most significant in his or her life define deviant behavior as being “right,” the individual is more likely to engage in deviant behavior; likewise, if the person's most significant friends and groups define deviant behavior as “wrong,” the person is less likely to engage in that behavior.

This approach helps explain not only juvenile gang behavior but also how peer cliques on high school campuses have such a powerful influence on teenagers' behavior.

Rational Choice Theory

Another approach to studying deviance is rational choice theory, which suggests that people weigh the rewards and risks involved in certain types of behavior and then decide which course of action to follow. Rational choice theory is based on the assumption that when people are faced with several courses of action, they will usually do what they believe is likely to have the best overall outcome. The *rational choice theory of deviance* states that deviant behavior occurs when a person weighs the costs and benefits of nonconventional or criminal behavior and determines that the benefits will outweigh the risks involved in such an action. Rational choice approaches suggest that most people who commit crimes do not engage in random acts of antisocial behavior. Instead, they make careful decisions based on weighing the available information regarding *situational factors*, such as the place of the crime, suitable targets, and the availability of people to deter the behavior, and *personal factors*, such as what rewards they may gain from their criminal behavior (■ Figure 6.6).



Richard Wong/Alamy Stock Photo

FIGURE 6.6 Is this example of graffiti likely to be the work of isolated artists or of gang members? In what ways do gangs reinforce such behavior?

differential association theory

the proposition that people have a greater tendency to deviate from societal norms when they frequently associate with persons who are more favorable toward deviance than conformity.

rational choice theory of deviance

the proposition that deviant behavior occurs when a person weighs the costs and benefits of nonconventional or criminal behavior and determines that the benefits will outweigh the risks involved in such an action.

How useful is rational choice theory in explaining deviance and crime? A major strength of this theory is that it explains why high-risk youth do not constantly engage in delinquent acts: They have learned to balance risk against the potential for criminal gain in each situation. Moreover, rational choice theory is not limited by the underlying assumption of most social structural theories, which is that the primary participants in deviant and criminal behaviors are people in the lower classes. Rational choice theory also has important policy implications regarding crime reduction or prevention, suggesting that people must be taught that the risks of engaging in criminal behavior far outweigh any benefits they may gain from their actions. Thus, people should be taught *not* to engage in crime.

Control Theory: Social Bonding

Another approach to studying deviance is control theory, which suggests that conformity is often associated with a person's bonds to other people. According to the sociologist Walter Reckless (1967), society produces pushes and pulls that move people toward criminal behavior; however, some people "insulate" themselves from such pressures by having positive self-esteem and good group cohesion. Reckless suggests that many people do not resort to deviance because of *inner containments*—such as self-control, a sense of responsibility, and resistance to diversions—and *outer containments*—such as reasonable social expectations and supervision from family and supportive friends (■ Figure 6.7). Those with the strongest containment mechanisms are able to withstand external pressures that might cause them to participate in deviant behavior. As you can see, control/social bonding theories have elements of functionalist and symbolic interactionist perspectives embedded within them because they focus on both social control and on the bonds that tie people together.

Extending Reckless's containment theory, sociologist Travis Hirschi's (1969) social control theory is based on the assumption that deviant behavior is minimized when people have strong bonds that bind them to family, school, peers, the church, and other social institutions. **Social bond theory** holds that the probability of deviant behavior increases when a person's ties to society are weakened or broken. According to Hirschi, social bonding consists of (1) *attachment* to other people, (2) *commitment* to conformity, (3) *involvement* in conventional activities, and (4) *belief* in the legitimacy of conventional values and norms. Later, Michael R. Gottfredson

and Hirschi (1990) modified the earlier theory that strong social bonds minimize criminal conduct and focused instead on the importance of self-control as a determinant of who will be likely to commit a crime. According to Gottfredson and Hirschi, high self-control is related to an individual's likelihood of conforming to norms and laws; low self-control can help explain a person's propensity to commit a crime or refrain from committing a crime. From this perspective, young children who are adequately socialized but have behavioral problems are more likely to grow into delinquents and then into adult offenders. Social bond and social control theory are both rooted in a functionalist assumption about the division of labor in families between men and women, with women being primarily responsible for how children are socialized and whether they become conformists or deviants in their behavior.



Oliver Wong/Shutterstock.com



LightField Studios/Shutterstock.com

FIGURE 6.7 According to control theory, strong bonds—including close family ties and compatible friendship groups—are a factor in explaining why many people do not engage in deviant behavior. How might spending quality time with one's family or good friends discourage delinquent behavior and crime among young people?

Labeling Theory

Labeling theory states that deviance is a socially constructed process in which social control agencies designate certain people as deviants and they, in turn, come to accept the label placed upon them and begin to act accordingly. Based on the symbolic interactionist theory of Charles H. Cooley and George H. Mead, labeling theory focuses on the variety of symbolic labels that people are given in their interactions with others.

How does the process of labeling occur? The act of fixing a person with a negative identity, such as “criminal” or “mentally ill,” is directly related to the power and status of those persons who *do* the labeling and those who are *being labeled*. Behavior, then, is not deviant in and of itself; it is defined as such by a social audience (Erikson, 1962). According to sociologist Howard Becker, *moral entrepreneurs* are often the ones who create the rules about what constitutes deviant or conventional behavior. Becker believes that moral entrepreneurs use their own perspectives on “right” and “wrong” to establish the rules by which they expect other people to live. They also label others as deviant. These rules are often enforced on persons with less power than the moral entrepreneurs. Becker (1963: 9) concludes that the deviant is “one to whom the label has successfully been applied; deviant behavior is behavior that people so label.”

As the definition of labeling theory suggests, several stages may occur in the labeling process (see ■ Figure 6.8). **Primary deviance** refers to the initial act of rule breaking (Lemert, 1951). However, if individuals accept the negative label that has been applied to them as a result of the primary deviance, they are more likely to continue to participate in the type of behavior that the label was initially meant to control. **Secondary deviance** occurs when a person who has been labeled a deviant accepts that new identity and continues the deviant behavior. For example, a person may shoplift an item of clothing from a department store but not be apprehended or labeled as a deviant. The person may subsequently decide to forgo such behavior in the future. However, if the person shoplifts the item, is apprehended, is labeled as a “thief,” and subsequently accepts that label, then the person may shoplift items from stores on numerous occasions. A few people engage in **tertiary deviance**, which occurs when a person who has been labeled a deviant seeks to normalize the behavior by relabeling it as nondeviant (Kitsuse, 1980). An example would be drug-users who believe that using marijuana or other illegal drugs is no more deviant than drinking alcoholic beverages and therefore should not be stigmatized.

How can labeling theory be used in research on deviance? In a now-classic study that continues to show how labeling theory works, sociologist William Chambliss

(1973) studied two groups of adolescent boys in a high school: the “Saints” and the “Roughnecks.” Members of both groups were constantly involved in acts of truancy, drinking, wild parties, petty theft, and vandalism. Although the Saints committed more offenses than the Roughnecks, the Roughnecks were the ones who were labeled as “troublemakers” and arrested by law enforcement officials. By contrast, the Saints were described as being the “most likely to succeed,” and none of the Saints were ever arrested. According to Chambliss, the Roughnecks were more likely to be labeled as deviants because they came from lower-income families, did poorly in school, and were generally viewed negatively, whereas the Saints came from “good families,” did well in school, and were generally viewed positively. Although both groups engaged in similar behavior, only the Roughnecks were stigmatized by a deviant label. The findings by Chambliss about the significance of labeling theory in explaining deviance, particularly in regard to juvenile offenses, have been reaffirmed by numerous other studies over the past five decades.

What are the specific contributions of labeling theory to explaining deviance and social control? One contribution of labeling theory is that it calls attention to the way in which social control and personal identity are intertwined: Labeling may contribute to the acceptance of deviant roles and self-images. What are the limitations of labeling theory? Although it has a number of shortcomings, the most obvious weakness of labeling theory is that it does not explain what caused the original acts that constituted primary deviance. Labeling theory also does not provide insight into why some people accept deviant labels that are put upon them whereas other individuals do not.

Primary deviance
Initial rule breaking



Secondary deviance
New identity accepted,
deviance continues



Tertiary deviance
Individual relabels
behavior as nondeviant

FIGURE 6.8 A Closer Look at Labeling Theory

social bond theory

the proposition that the probability of deviant behavior increases when a person's ties to society are weakened or broken.

labeling theory

the proposition that deviance is a socially constructed process in which social control agencies designate certain people as deviants and they, in turn, come to accept the label placed upon them and begin to act accordingly.

primary deviance

the initial act of rule-breaking.

secondary deviance

the process that occurs when a person who has been labeled a deviant accepts that new identity and continues the deviant behavior.

tertiary deviance

deviance that occurs when a person who has been labeled a deviant seeks to normalize the behavior by relabeling it as nondeviant.

Postmodernist Perspectives on Deviance

Departing from other theoretical perspectives on deviance, some postmodern theorists emphasize that the study of deviance reveals how the powerful exert control over the powerless by taking away their free will to think and act as they might choose. From this approach, institutions such as schools, prisons, and mental hospitals use knowledge, norms, and values to categorize people into “deviant” subgroups such as slow-learners, convicted felons, or criminally insane individuals, and then to control them through specific patterns of discipline.

An example of this idea is found in social theorist Michel Foucault’s *Discipline and Punish* (1979), in which Foucault examines the intertwining nature of power, knowledge, and social control. In this study of prisons from the mid-1800s to the early 1900s, Foucault found that many penal institutions ceased torturing prisoners who disobeyed the rules and began using new surveillance techniques to maintain social control. Although the prisons appeared to be more humane in the post-torture era, Foucault contends that the new means of surveillance impinged more on prisoners and brought greater power to prison officials. To explain, he described the *panopticon*—a structure that gives prison officials the possibility of complete observation of criminals at all times. Typically, the panopticon was a tower located in the center of a circular prison from which guards could see all the cells (■ Figure 6.9). Although the prisoners knew they could be observed at any time, they did not actually know when their behavior was being scrutinized. As a result, prison officials were able to use their knowledge as a form of power over the inmates. Eventually, the guards did not even have to be present all the time because prisoners believed that they were under constant scrutiny by officials in the observation post.

Foucault’s view on deviance and social control has influenced other social analysts, including researchers who have looked at a variety of social issues, ranging from workplace surveillance to squelching music-pirating on the Internet. These analyses typically see the world as a modern panopticon that gives supervisors and law enforcement officials virtually unlimited capabilities for surveillance. Today, smartphones and social media outlets provide new opportunities for

surveillance by government officials, corporate supervisors, and others who are not visible to the individuals being watched. In such cases, social control and discipline are based on the use of knowledge, power, and technology.

We have examined functionalist, conflict, symbolic interactionist, and postmodernist perspectives on social control, deviance, and crime (see the Concept Quick Review). All of these explanations contribute to our understanding of the causes and consequences of deviant behavior; however, we now turn to the subject of crime itself.

Crime Classifications and Statistics

Crime in the United States can be divided into different categories. We look first at the legal classifications of crime and then at categories typically used by sociologists and criminologists.

How the Law Classifies Crime

Crimes are divided into felonies and misdemeanors. The distinction between the two is based on the gravity of the crime. A *felony* is a serious crime such as rape, homicide, or aggravated assault, for which punishment typically ranges from more than a year’s imprisonment to death. A *misdemeanor* is a minor crime that is typically punished by less than one year in jail. In either event a fine may be part of the sanction as well. Actions that constitute felonies and misdemeanors are determined by the legislatures in the various states; thus, their definitions vary from jurisdiction to jurisdiction.



David R. Frazier Photolibrary, Inc./Alamy Stock Photo

FIGURE 6.9 Based on Michael Foucault’s ideas, high-tech surveillance makes it possible for jail and prison officials to use their knowledge of prisoners’ activities as a form of power over the inmates. This jail security control room is furnished with numerous video monitors and other technology that remotely controls doors so that inmates are under constant surveillance.

CONCEPT Quick Review

Theoretical Perspectives on Deviance

	Theory	Key Elements
Functionalist Perspectives		
Robert K. Merton	Strain theory	Deviance occurs when access to the approved means of reaching culturally approved goals is blocked. Innovation, ritualism, retreatism, or rebellion may result.
Richard Cloward/Lloyd Ohlin	Opportunity theory	Lower-class delinquents subscribe to middle-class values but cannot attain them. As a result, they form gangs to gain social status and may achieve their goals through illegitimate means.
Conflict Perspectives		
Karl Marx and Richard Quinney	Critical approach	The powerful use the law and the criminal justice system to protect their own class interests.
Kathleen Daly and Meda Chesney-Lind	Feminist approach	Historically, women have been ignored in research on crime. Liberal feminism views women's deviance as arising from gender discrimination, radical feminism focuses on patriarchy, and socialist feminism emphasizes the effects of capitalism and patriarchy on women's deviance.
Symbolic Interactionist Perspectives		
Edwin Sutherland	Differential association	Deviant behavior is learned in interaction with others. A person becomes delinquent when exposure to law-breaking attitudes is more extensive than exposure to law-abiding attitudes.
Travis Hirschi	Social control/social bonding	Social bonds keep people from becoming criminals. When ties to family, friends, and others become weak, an individual is most likely to engage in criminal behavior.
Howard Becker	Labeling theory	Acts are deviant or criminal because they have been labeled as such. Powerful groups often label less powerful individuals.
Edwin Lemert	Primary/secondary deviance	Primary deviance is the initial act. Secondary deviance occurs when a person accepts the label of "deviant" and continues to engage in the behavior that initially produced the label.
Postmodernist Perspective		
Michel Foucault	Knowledge as power	Power, knowledge, and social control are intertwined. In prisons, for example, new means of surveillance that make prisoners think they are being watched all the time give officials knowledge that inmates do not have. Thus, the officials have a form of power over the inmates.

Other Crime Categories

The *Uniform Crime Report (UCR)* is the major source of information on crimes reported in the United States. The UCR has been compiled since 1930 by the FBI based on information filed by law enforcement agencies throughout the country. This report is available online at the FBI website and is listed as "Crime in the United States" (showing the latest year available). The UCR focuses on violent crime and property crime (which, prior to 2004, were jointly referred to in that report as "index crimes") but also contains data on other types of crime (see ■ Figure 6.10). In 2018 an estimated 10,310,960 arrests were made for all criminal infractions

(excluding traffic violations) in the United States. Although the UCR gives some indication of crime, especially through arrest statistics, the figures do not reflect the *actual* number and kinds of crimes that are committed, as is discussed later.

Violent Crime *Violent crime* consists of actions—murder, rape, robbery, and aggravated assault—involving force or the threat of force against others. Although only 5 percent

violent crime

actions—murder, rape, robbery, and aggravated assault—involving force or the threat of force against others.

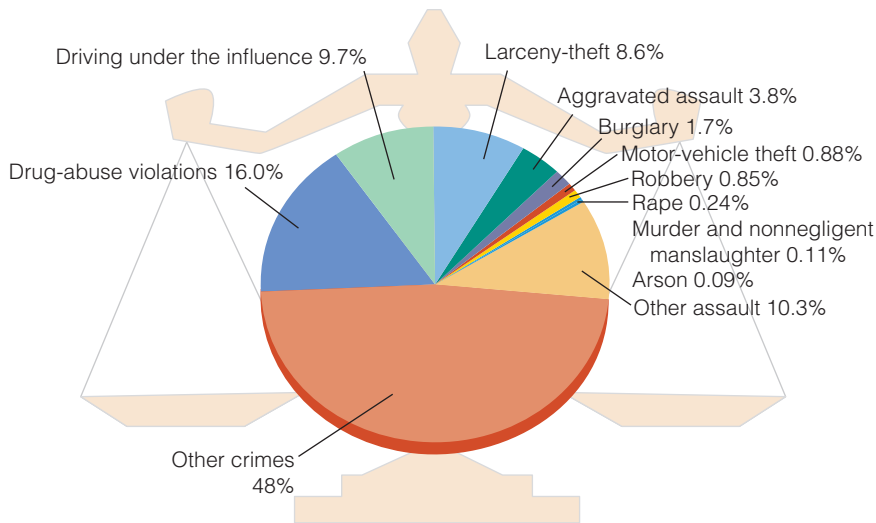


FIGURE 6.10 Distribution of Arrests by Type of Offense, 2018

Note: Percentages may not equal 100% because of rounding.
Source: FBI, 2019e.

of all arrests in the United States in 2018 were for violent crimes, this category is probably the most anxiety-provoking of all criminal behavior: Most of us know someone who has been a victim of violent crime, or we have been so ourselves. Victims are often physically injured or even lose their lives; the psychological trauma can last for years after the event.

Violent crime also receives the most sustained attention from the media. In the aftermath of every U.S. mass shooting in recent years, communities have been overrun with worldwide media outlets bringing in broadcasting trucks, bright lights, cameras, and hundreds of reporters and commentators to continually describe, analyze, and reanalyze what might have happened to cause such a tragic event. Some information provided by the media later proves to be accurate; however, other statements are found to be flawed or completely inaccurate. On the one hand, people learn details about crime and violence that they otherwise might not know about or experience firsthand. This information may help them form an opinion on issues such as school safety, gun control, and the nature and extent of violence in the United States. On the other hand, continual media reports about a tragedy provide us with endless details about the crime and the fear that it has produced in survivors, families, neighbors, and others in the community.

Many media presentations of crime prey on fear, disbelief, and distrust. For people who are already fearful of violent crime, media representations confirm these concerns and make individuals more afraid to leave their homes and interact with others. Violence leaves millions worrying about their safety and that of their children and other family members, even if the statistical odds of a similar occurrence in their own community are small.

Property Crime *Property crimes* include burglary (breaking into private property to commit a serious crime), motor-vehicle theft, larceny-theft (theft of property worth \$50 or more), and arson. In the United States a property crime occurs, on average, once every 4.4 seconds; a violent crime occurs, on average, once every 26.2 seconds (see ■ Figure 6.11). In most property crimes the primary motive is to obtain money or some other desired valuable.

Public Order Crime *Public order crimes* (sometimes referred to as “morals” crimes) involve an illegal action voluntarily engaged in by the participants, such as prostitution, illegal gambling, the private use of illegal drugs, and illegal pornography. Many people assert that such conduct should not be labeled as a crime; these offenses are often referred to as *victimless crimes* because they involve a willing exchange of illegal goods or services among adults. However, public order crimes can include children and



FIGURE 6.11 The FBI Crime Clock, 2018

Source: Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2019a.

adolescents as well as adults. Young children and adolescents may unwillingly become child pornography “stars” or prostitutes.

Occupational and Corporate Crime

Although sociologist Edwin Sutherland (1949) developed the theory of white-collar crime more than seventy years ago, it was not until the 1980s that the public became fully aware of its nature. **Occupational (white-collar) crime** comprises illegal activities committed by people in the course of their employment or financial affairs (■ Figure 6.12).

In addition to acting for their own financial benefit, some white-collar offenders become involved in criminal conspiracies designed to improve the market share or profitability of their companies. This is known as **corporate crime**—illegal acts committed by corporate employees on behalf of the corporation and with its support. Examples include antitrust violations; tax evasion; misrepresentations in advertising; infringements on patents, copyrights, and trademarks; price-fixing; and financial fraud. These crimes are a result of deliberate decisions made by corporate personnel to enhance resources or profits at the expense of competitors, consumers, and the general public.

Although people who commit occupational and corporate crimes can be arrested, fined, and sent to prison, some people are less likely to regard such behavior as “criminal.” In many cases, punishment for such offenses has been a fine and a relatively brief prison sentence in settings sometimes referred to as “country club prisons” because of their amenities.

For many years, public concern and media attention focused primarily on the street crimes disproportionately committed by persons who were poor, powerless, and non-white. Today, however, part of our focus has shifted to crimes committed by top banking officials in corporate suites, such as fraud, tax evasion, and insider trading by executives at large and well-known corporations. For example, Credit Suisse, a global banking giant headquartered in Zurich, Switzerland, pled guilty to conspiring to help U.S. citizens hide their wealth from federal tax authorities in secret off-shore accounts. Credit Suisse agreed to pay \$2.6 billion in fines (Protest and Silver-Greenberg, 2014). Although this is not an isolated example of this kind of crime, it is one of the cases in which banks or other corporations pled guilty to criminal wrongdoing and received a substantial penalty for doing so. In the United States, a scandal involving Wells Fargo similarly cost that banking corporation more than \$1 billion in fines and legal claims when employees of the retail banking unit were encouraged to open more than a million unauthorized accounts and sell customers



Roy Morsch/AGE Fotostock

FIGURE 6.12 Persons who are accused of occupational and corporate crimes may be treated differently by law enforcement officials and the criminal justice system than individuals accused of certain violent crimes. What reasons can you give for possible disparities in treatment and sentencing based on the types of crime committed?

banking products they did not request in return for healthy commissions (Healy and Serafeim, 2019). Like other major transnational corporations, international banks are often considered “too big to jail,” and some illegal practices have been going on for at least a century.

How damaging to the public are corporate crimes? Some corporate crimes are more costly in terms of money and lives lost than street crimes. Thousands of jobs and billions of dollars have been lost annually as a result of corporate crime. Deaths resulting from corporate crimes such as polluting the air and water, manufacturing defective products, and selling unsafe foods and drugs far exceed the number of deaths caused by homicide each year. Other costs include the effect on the moral climate of society. Throughout the United States the confidence of everyday

property crimes

burglary (breaking into private property to commit a serious crime), motor-vehicle theft, larceny-theft (theft of property worth \$50 or more), and arson.

victimless crimes

crimes involving a willing exchange of illegal goods or services among adults.

occupational (white-collar) crime

illegal activities committed by people in the course of their employment or financial affairs.

corporate crime

illegal acts committed by corporate employees on behalf of the corporation and with its support.

people in the nation's economy has been shaken by the greedy and illegal behavior of corporate insiders. However, a large number of prosecutions have taken place of people who have engaged in white-collar crimes such as insider-trading cases and tax fraud. A concerted effort is required to continue to crack down on financial crimes because many prosecutors do not consider them interesting or serious enough to pursue (White, 2019).

Internet Crime *Internet crime* consists of FBI-related scams such as nonpayment/nondelivery of merchandise, extortion, personal data breaches, phishing, confidence fraud, romance fraud, (s)extortion, identity theft, credit-card fraud, and fake tech-support fraud. The proliferation of computers and Internet access worldwide has contributed to the growth of lucrative crimes in which the victim never meets the perpetrator.

Recently, individuals have been victimized by an FBI/government impersonation scammer, in which a perpetrator poses as a high-ranking government official or as the FBI and demands payment of overdue taxes or other ways to defraud victims (see ■ Figure 6.13). Perpetrators of many of these schemes use “official” government letterhead, the FBI seal, or other fake documentation to get people to believe the message about taxes that are owed, money or property that the recipient has allegedly inherited, bogus lottery winnings, and sometimes even extortion threats. However, the recipient must contribute a specific amount of money to gain an inheritance, lottery winnings, or other prize. Although no monetary losses are incurred in some cases, public trust is still undermined, and these scams pose a viable threat to national security.

Other frequently reported Internet crimes include the intimidation/extortion scam, such as payday loans or grandparent scams, in which older individuals are targeted by fraudsters who claim to be a relative in a legal or financial

crisis and make an urgent plea for money to be sent to help them. Using another twist, romance scams are perpetrated by individuals who promise love and romance to online victims they meet in chat rooms, dating sites, and social media networks. Romance scams have grown in popularity because it is relatively easy to target individuals who seek companionship or romance online. The victim believes that he or she is becoming acquainted with, or dating, a real person online because scammers sometimes write poetry or send flowers and gifts to victims until they persuade them to part with their money.

Malware and ransomware schemes are hoaxes pulled on computer users through pop-up messages that alert individuals that their computer is infected with a virus and bait them into purchasing nonexistent or useless software that will allegedly remove the virus from their computer. One of the older, most frightening of the Internet schemes was the Hit-Man scam, in which scammers sent an email claiming to be a hit man hired to kill the victim. Recipients were required to pay money to make sure that the hit man did not carry out the death contract. More recently, scammers using this approach have gained personal information about the alleged victim based on what he or she has posted on social media sites, giving more credibility to their threat. Although the FBI has cracked down on this crime, the scam continues to be used worldwide by individuals who cannot be traced to any specific country.

Internet crime continues to grow because perpetrators can so easily change their tactics. According to the FBI, the total loss involving known Internet crimes is more than \$2.7 billion annually (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2018c).

Organized Crime *Organized crime* is a business operation that supplies illegal goods and services for profit. Premeditated, continuous illegal activities of organized crime include drug-trafficking, prostitution, loan-sharking, money-laundering, and large-scale theft such as truck-hijacking. No single organization controls all organized crime; rather, many groups operate at all levels of society. In recent decades, organized crime in the United States has become increasingly transnational in nature. The globalization of the economy and the introduction of better communications technology have made it possible for groups around the world to operate in the United States and other nations. The FBI has identified a number of major categories of organized crime threats in the United States, as shown in ■ Figure 6.14.

Organized crime thrives because there is great demand for illegal goods and services. Criminal organizations initially gain control of illegal activities by combining threats and promises.

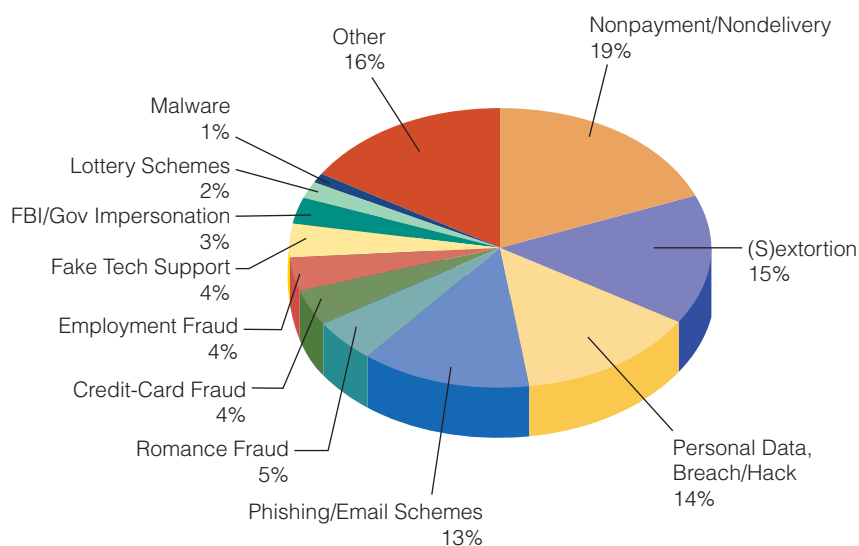


FIGURE 6.13 Top Reported Internet Crime Types, 2018

Source: Source: FBI, Internet Crime Report, 2019b.



List is in no particular order.

FIGURE 6.14 Organized Crime Threats in the United States

Source: <https://www.fbi.gov/investigate/organized-crime>, 2020

*Includes groups born in or with families from the former Soviet Union or Central Europe.

For example, small-time operators running drug or prostitution rings may be threatened with violence if they compete with organized crime or fail to make required payoffs.

Apart from their illegal enterprises, organized crime groups have infiltrated the world of legitimate business. Known linkages between legitimate businesses and organized crime exist in banking, hotels and motels, real estate, garbage collection, vending machines, construction, delivery and long-distance hauling, garment manufacturing, insurance, stocks and bonds, vacation resorts, and funeral homes. In addition, some law enforcement and government officials are corrupted through bribery, campaign contributions, and favors intended to buy them off.

In the twenty-first century, organized crime groups have further intensified their illegal activities in global drug and sex trafficking, identity theft, Internet scams, and other forms of cybercrime that are even more difficult to detect and can produce billions of dollars.

Political Crime The term *political crime* refers to illegal or unethical acts involving the usurpation of power by government officials or illegal/unethical acts perpetrated against the government by outsiders seeking to make a political statement, undermine the government, or overthrow it. Government officials may use their authority unethically or illegally for the purpose of material gain or political power. They may engage in graft (taking advantage of political position to gain money or property) through

bribery, kickbacks, or “insider” deals that benefit them financially.

Some acts committed by agents of the government against persons and groups believed to be threats to national security are also classified as political crimes. Four types of political deviance have been attributed to some officials: (1) secrecy and deception designed to manipulate public opinion, (2) abuse of power, (3) prosecution of individuals because of their political activities, and (4) official violence, such as police brutality against people of color or the use of citizens as unwilling guinea pigs in scientific research.

Political crimes also include prison corruption in which facilities have systemic corruption. Various schemes are used to corrupt prison officials, including urging officials to smuggle contraband, active recruiting of gang members to become correctional officers, and exploitation of staff by prison inmates. Other forms of political crimes include border corruption when officials are corrupted into accepting a bribe for allowing carloads of undocumented workers to come into the United States or allowing for drugs or other contraband to be imported illegally into the country. Likewise, election crimes occur when the voting process is corrupted by voter/ballot fraud or civil-rights violations at the polls.

Outsiders may also engage in political crime. For example, Edward Snowden, formerly a U.S. computer professional, has been charged with theft of government property and unauthorized communication of national defense information (■ Figure 6.15). Snowden’s alleged crime was leaking classified data from the National Security Agency to various media outlets that proceeded to make formerly confidential government information available to a worldwide audience. Some documents revealed the presence of global surveillance programs implemented by the U.S. government and raised concerns about the balance between national security and individual privacy. At the time of this writing, Snowden remains in Russia and continues to be a fugitive sought by the U.S. government.

Political crime has become more expansive as newer technologies have made it easy for information to be gathered and stored beyond the reach of any one government and for large amounts of data to be released instantaneously and globally without going through processes such as the

Internet crime

illegal acts committed by criminals on the Internet, including FBI-related scams, identity theft, advance fee fraud, nonauction/nondelivery of merchandise, and overpayment fraud.

organized crime

a business operation that supplies illegal goods and services for profit.

political crime

illegal or unethical acts involving the usurpation of power by government officials or illegal/unethical acts perpetrated against the government by outsiders seeking to make a political statement, undermine the government, or overthrow it.



FIGURE 6.15 Edward Snowden, referred to by some media analysts as an NSA whistleblower, is shown here being interviewed about allegations of U.S. spying in Germany. How have newer technologies changed the nature of political crime?

“declassification” of information, which typically takes months or years to accomplish.

Crime Statistics

How useful are crime statistics as a source of information about crime? As mentioned previously, official crime statistics provide important information on crime; however, the data reflect only those crimes that have been reported to the police.

Why are some crimes not reported? People are more likely to report crime when they believe that something can be done about it (apprehension of the perpetrator or retrieval of their property, for example). About half of all assault and robbery victims do not report the crime because they may be embarrassed or fear reprisal by the perpetrator. Thus, the number of crimes reported to police represents only the proverbial “tip of the iceberg” when compared with all offenses actually committed. Official statistics are problematic in social science research because of these limitations.

The *National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS)* was developed by the Bureau of Justice Statistics as an alternative means of collecting crime statistics. This annual survey collects information on nonfatal crimes reported and not reported to the police against persons age twelve and older from a nationally representative sample of U.S. households. In 2018 members of 151,055 households were interviewed in person to determine if they had been the victims of crimes even if they had not reported the crime to law enforcement officials. Between 2015 and 2018, the number of violent crimes, known and unknown to the police, reported in the NCVS increased from 2.7 million in 2015 to 3.3 million in 2018.

This means that the rate of violent victimizations rose from 9.5 per 1,000 persons age twelve and older in 2015 to 12.9 per 1,000 in 2018. However, the rate of property victimization reported in the NCVS decreased from 118.6 per 1,000 households in 2016 to 108.2 per 1,000 households in 2018 (Morgan and Oudekerk, 2018).

Studies based on anonymous self-reports of criminal behavior often reveal much higher rates of crime than those found in official statistics. For example, self-reports tend to indicate that adolescents of all classes violate criminal laws. However, not all children who commit juvenile offenses are apprehended and referred to court. Children from white, affluent families may have their cases handled outside the juvenile justice system (for example, a youth may be sent to a private school or hospital rather than to a juvenile court and a public correctional facility).

Some crimes committed by persons of higher socioeconomic status in the course of business are handled by an administrative or quasi-judicial body, such as the Securities and Exchange Commission or the Federal Trade Commission, or by civil courts. As a result, many elite crimes are never classified as “crimes,” nor are the businesspeople who commit them labeled as “criminals.”

Terrorism and Crime

In the twenty-first century, the United States and other nations are confronted with a difficult prospect: how to deal with terrorism. **Terrorism** is the calculated, unlawful use of physical force or threats of violence against persons or property in order to intimidate or coerce a government, organization, or individual for the purpose of gaining some political, religious, economic, or social objective. The United States has not been immune to terrorism. It is believed that mass violence in 2016 in San Bernardino, California, was an act of terrorism, as well as the 2013 bombings at the Boston Marathon that targeted innocent participants and spectators. Of course, the most devastating act of terrorism in the United States took place on September 11, 2001 (the “9/11 attacks”), when nearly three thousand people, including nineteen airplane hijackers, lost their lives in attacks on the World Trade Center in New York and the Pentagon in Washington, D.C. In the aftermath of this tragic event, national security in the United States was revamped and intensified in an effort to prevent a recurrence of these tragedies. But these efforts did not stop more recent acts of terrorism including the El Paso, Texas, mass shooter in 2019 who killed twenty-two people and injured twenty-four others at a Walmart store while claiming that he was opposed to the “Hispanic invasion of Texas.” Other shootings also took place at a California synagogue where the gunman was motivated by anti-Semitism.

Some of the worst terrorist attacks in other nations have included a devastating attack in Paris by ISIS (Islamic State) where seventeen people were killed in the office of the French satirical magazine *Charlie Hebdo* and at a kosher grocery store (■Figure 6.16). A cartoon depiction of the Prophet Muhammad was thought to have set off this particular attack. Although at the time of this writing in 2019, fewer terrorist attacks had occurred in Europe, perhaps because of the at least temporary suppression of ISIS in some regions, the United Nations was once again warning that international terrorist attacks might be forthcoming in the future. According to a United Nations spokesperson, the radicalization of individuals held inside Europe's prisons remained a critical factor because a number of them were scheduled to be released and then might regroup and start launching attacks again (Cummings-Bruce, 2019).

How do sociologists and criminologists explain world terrorism, which may have its origins in more than one nation and include diverse “cells” of terrorists who operate in a somewhat ganglike manner but are believed to be following

directives from leaders elsewhere? In order to deal with the aftermath of terrorist attacks, government officials typically focus on “known enemies” such as Osama bin Laden, who was killed by U.S. military forces in 2011. The nebulous nature of the “enemy” and the problems faced by any one government trying to identify and apprehend the perpetrators of acts of terrorism have resulted in a global “war on terror.”

Social scientists who use a rational choice approach suggest that terrorists are rational actors who constantly calculate the gains and losses of participation in violent—and sometimes suicidal—acts against others. Major sporting events, such as the Olympic Games, have been the targets for terrorists who act when the whole world is watching and put their beliefs or causes out for everyone to see. Unfortunately, the bombings of buses, schools, and other public accommodations become frequent occurrences and provide a venue for persons to kill or threaten to kill many innocent civilians and to destroy millions of dollars in property. *Rational choice* seems an odd term for behavior such as this.

Street Crimes and Criminals

Given the limitations of official statistics, is it possible to determine who commits crimes? We have much more information available about conventional (street) crime than elite crime; therefore, statistics concerning street crime do not show who commits all types of crime. Gender, age, class, and race are important factors in official statistics pertaining to street crime.

Gender and Crime There is a gender gap in crime statistics: Males are arrested for significantly more crimes than females (■Figure 6.17). In 2018 nearly 73 percent of all persons arrested nationwide were male. Males made up slightly less than 80 percent of persons arrested for violent crimes and about 63 percent of all persons arrested for property crimes (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2019e). Females have higher arrest rates than males only in the category of prostitution and commercialized vice. In all other categories, males have higher arrest rates.

Before further consideration of differences in crime rates by males and females, three similarities should be noted. First, the most common arrest categories for both men and women are driving under the influence of alcohol, drug-abuse violations, larceny, and minor or criminal mischief types of offenses. Second, liquor-law violations (such as underage drinking), simple assault, and disorderly conduct are middle-range offenses for both men and women. Third, the rate of arrests for murder, arson, and embezzlement is relatively low for both men and women.



GAUTIER Stephane/Alamy Stock Photo

FIGURE 6.16 Terrorism remains a major worldwide concern in the twenty-first century. Here, people are paying homage to victims of one of many terrorist attacks in Paris, France. The United States has not been immune to terrorism either.

terrorism

the calculated, unlawful use of physical force or threats of violence against persons or property in order to intimidate or coerce a government, organization, or individual for the purpose of gaining some political, religious, economic, or social objective.



Sean Canyon/The Image Works

FIGURE 6.17 Most of the crimes that women commit are nonviolent ones. Nevertheless, many women are incarcerated. What effects might a mother's imprisonment have on the lives of her children?

The most important gender differences in arrest rates are reflected in the proportionately greater involvement of men in major property crimes (such as robbery, fraud, and larceny-theft) and violent crime, as shown in ■Figure 6.18. In 2018 men

accounted for nearly 88 percent of all murders, 85 percent of robberies, and 58 percent of all larceny-theft arrests in the United States. Property crimes for which women are most frequently arrested are nonviolent in nature, including embezzlement (49 percent), larceny-theft (42 percent), and prostitution and commercialized vice (64 percent). In the past, when women were arrested for serious violent and property crimes, they were often seen as accomplices of the men who planned the crime and instigated its commission. Today, however, women are more likely to play an active role in planning and carrying out major crimes such as robbery.

Age, Class, and Crime Of all factors associated with crime, the age of the offender is one of the most significant. Arrest rates for violent crime and property crime are highest for people ages eighteen and over. In 2018 individuals over age eighteen accounted for about 90.3 percent of all arrests for violent crime, as compared to only 9.7 percent for people under age eighteen. Persons age eighteen and over accounted for nearly 89 percent of all property crime arrests as compared to about 11 percent of arrests for property crime among persons under age eighteen (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2019e).

The median age of those arrested for aggravated assault and homicide is somewhat older, generally in the late twenties. Typically, white-collar criminals are even older because it takes time to acquire both a high-ranking position and the skills needed to commit this particular type of crime. At every age and for nearly all offenses, rates of arrest remain higher for males than for females. This female-to-male ratio remains fairly constant across all age categories.

Individuals from all classes commit crimes; they simply commit different kinds of crimes. Persons from lower socio-economic backgrounds are more likely to be arrested for violent and property crimes. By contrast, persons from the upper part of the class structure generally commit white-collar or elite crimes, although only a small proportion of these individuals will be arrested or convicted of a crime.

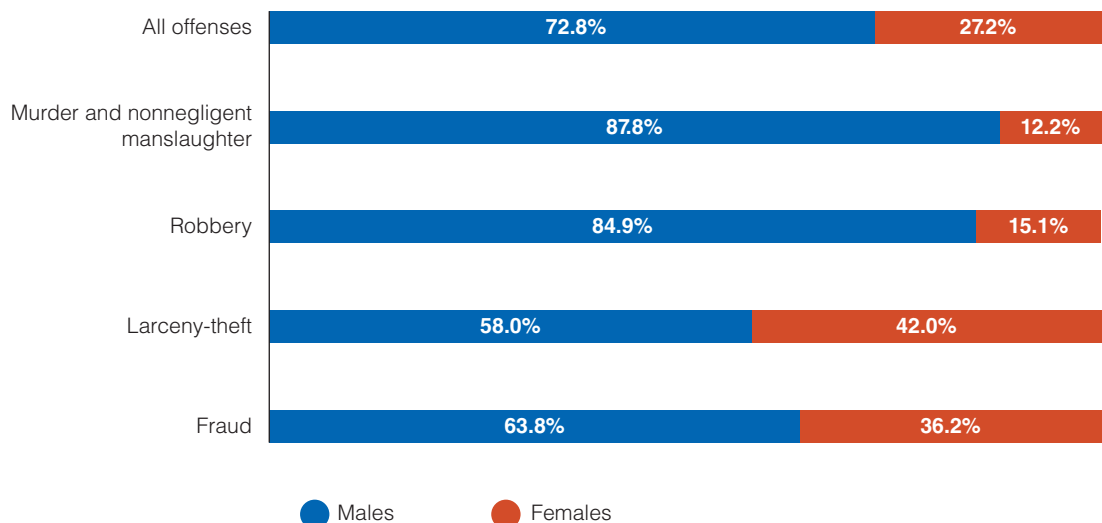


FIGURE 6.18 Arrest Rates by Gender, 2018 (Selected Offenses)
Source: FBI, 2019e.

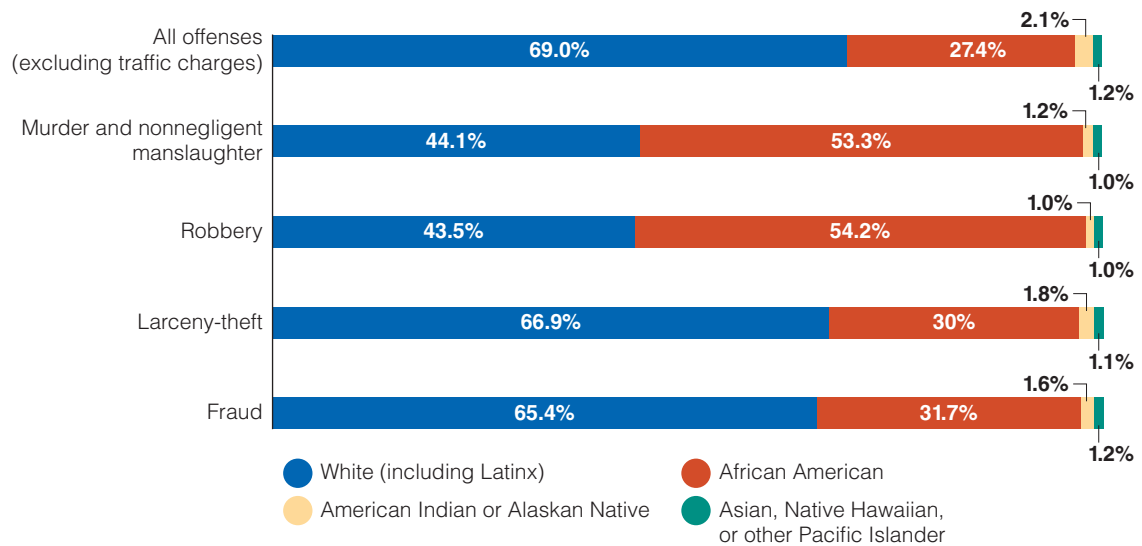


FIGURE 6.19 Arrest Rates by Race, 2018 (Selected Offenses)

Source: FBI, 2019e.

Race and Crime Are people from some racial-ethnic categories more likely to be arrested for committing a crime? In 2018 whites (including Hispanics or Latinx) accounted for 69 percent of *all arrests*. In the same year the total estimated arrest rate for African Americans was 27.4, as shown in ■ Figure 6.19. The total arrest rate for American Indians or Alaskan Natives was 2.1 percent, slightly above the 1.2 percent for Asians, Native Hawaiians, and other Pacific Islanders. African Americans made up 53.3 percent of all arrests for murder and nonnegligent manslaughter. By contrast, arrest rates for whites were higher for nonviolent property crimes, including 66.9 percent of all arrests for larceny-theft and 65.4 percent for fraud (FBI, 2019e).

Although official arrest records reveal certain trends, these data tell us very little about the actual dynamics of crime by racial-ethnic category. According to official statistics, African Americans are overrepresented in arrest data. In some areas, African Americans are the vast majority of those arrested for certain categories of crime. For example, African Americans made up about 53 percent of arrests for murder and nonnegligent manslaughter, 54 percent for robbery, and 48 percent for gambling and commercialized vice. Likewise, African Americans are more likely than people in other racial or ethnic classifications to become crime victims. What sociological factors might account for this disparity in crime statistics?

In 2018 Native Americans (designated in the UCR as “American Indians”) or Alaskan Natives

accounted for 2.1 percent of all arrests, although the highest-ranking crimes were liquor-law violations, drunkenness, disorderly conduct, vagrancy, and offenses against the family and children (FBI, 2019e). In that same year, 1.2 percent of all arrests were of Asians and 0.2 percent of Native Hawaiians or other Pacific Islanders. Among the higher percentages of arrests for both of these categories was gambling (FBI, 2019e).

Are arrest statistics a true reflection of crimes committed? These statistics reflect the UCR’s focus on violent crimes and property crimes, especially the latter, which are committed primarily by lower-income people. This emphasis draws attention away from the white-collar and elite crimes committed by middle- and upper-income people (■ Figure 6.20).



Nick Koudis/Photodisc/Getty Images

FIGURE 6.20 According to Karl Marx, capitalism produces haves and have-nots, and each group engages in different types of crime. Statistically, the man being arrested here is much more likely to be suspected of a financial crime than a violent crime.

Police may also demonstrate bias and racism in their decisions regarding whom to question, detain, or arrest under certain circumstances.

Statistics may also show that a disproportionate number of people of color are arrested because law enforcement officials may focus on certain types of crime and direct their attention to specific “high-crime” neighborhoods in which deviance is believed to be more prevalent. Law enforcement agencies have also focused on drug-related offenses, particularly among young persons of color, and arrest rates typically have been higher for this type of crime.

Finally, arrests should not be equated with guilt: Being arrested does not necessarily mean that a person is guilty of the crime with which he or she has been charged. In the United States, individuals accused of crimes are, at least theoretically, “innocent until proven guilty.”

Crime Victims

How can we learn more about crime victims? As previously discussed, the NCVS, compiled by the U.S. Census Bureau for the Bureau of Justice Statistics, provides annual data about crimes (reported and not reported to the police) from which we can find out more about who is actually victimized by crime. In 2018 about 242,980 persons age twelve and older from 151,055 U.S. households participated in the NCVS. Based on this data, researchers found that residents age twelve and older experienced an estimated 6.4 million violent victimizations and 13.5 million property victimizations (Morgan and Ouwerkerk, 2019).

Victimization studies look at the sex and race of persons being victimized. In 2018, there was a significant difference in male and female violent victimization rates. In 2018, 2.7 million males age twelve and older reported that they had experienced one or more violent victimizations. However, 3.2 million females in the same age category reported violent victimizations (Morgan and Ouwerkerk, 2019). By definition, violent victimization includes rape/sexual assault, robbery, total assault, aggravated assault, and simple assault. As might be expected, robbery victimization was higher for males; victimization for rape or sexual assault was higher for females. Race is also an important factor in studying victimization. In 2018 the rate of violent victimization for blacks was higher (1.8 percent) than for whites (0.8 percent).

What can we learn from victimization studies such as this? Because not all crimes are reported, we can find out more about the nature and extent to which people in specific regions of the country, income categories, racial or ethnic groupings, ages, and other demographic characteristics are victimized by violent and property crimes in the United States. These data can be compared with official crime statistics to see if arrest rates and convictions are an accurate reflection of crime. The NCVS particularly helps us to learn about the types and numbers of offenses that go unreported to police or other law enforcement officials who are part

of the criminal justice system. The Uniform Crime Reporting system and the National Crime Victimization Survey together provide us with a more complete picture of crime in the United States. The NCVS measures crime reported to and not reported to police. The UCR, administered by the FBI, measures only crime reported to the police (Morgan and Ouwerkerk, 2019).

The Criminal Justice System

Of all the agencies of social control (including families, schools, and churches) in contemporary societies, only the criminal justice system has the power to control crime and punish those who are convicted of criminal conduct. The *criminal justice system* refers to the local, state, and federal agencies that enforce laws, adjudicate crimes, and treat and rehabilitate criminals. The system includes the police, courts, correctional facilities, and people employed in police agencies, courts, prosecutorial agencies, correctional institutions, and probation and parole departments.

The term *criminal justice system* is somewhat misleading because it implies that law enforcement agencies, courts, and correctional facilities constitute one large, integrated system when, in reality, the criminal justice system is made up of many bureaucracies that have considerable discretion in how decisions are made. *Discretion* refers to the use of personal judgment by police officers, prosecutors, judges, and other criminal justice system officials regarding whether and how to proceed in a given situation (see ■ Figure 6.21). The police are a prime example of discretionary processes because they have the power to selectively enforce the law and have on many occasions been accused of being too harsh or too lenient on alleged offenders.

The Police

The role of the police in the criminal justice system continues to expand. The police are responsible for crime control and maintenance of order, but local police departments now serve numerous other human-service functions, including improving community relations, resolving family disputes, and helping people during emergencies. Not all “police officers” are employed by local police departments; they are employed in governmental agencies ranging from the local level to the federal level. However, we focus primarily on metropolitan police departments because they constitute the vast majority of the law enforcement community.

Metropolitan police departments are made up of a chain of command (similar to the military), with ranks such as officer, sergeant, lieutenant, and captain, and each rank must follow specific rules and procedures. However, individual officers maintain a degree of discretion in the decisions they make as they respond to calls and try to apprehend



FIGURE 6.21 Discretionary Powers in Law Enforcement

fleeing or violent offenders. The problem of police discretion is most acute when decisions are made to use force (such as grabbing, pushing, or hitting a suspect) or deadly force (shooting and killing a suspect). Generally, deadly force is allowed only in situations in which a suspect is engaged in a felony, is fleeing the scene of a felony, or is resisting arrest and has endangered someone's life.

Although many police departments have worked to improve their public image in recent years, the practice of *racial profiling*—the use of ethnic or racial background as a means of identifying criminal suspects—remains a highly charged issue. Officers in some police departments have singled out for discriminatory treatment African Americans, Latinx, and other people of color, treating them more harshly than white (European American) individuals. Racial profiling has continued to be in the headlines as numerous, often unarmed young African American males have been shot and killed by police officers in various cities throughout the nation. These shootings resulted in many community protests that proclaimed, “Black Lives Matter.” The nation was stunned when a shooter killed five Dallas police officers at a peaceful rally protesting the killing of black men by police officers (see ■ Figure 6.22).

The belief that differential treatment takes place on the basis of race contributes to a negative image of police among many people of color who believe that they have been hassled by police officers, and this assumption is intensified by the fact that police departments have typically been made up of white male personnel at all levels. As many social analysts and media commentators point out, however, this is not a problem unique to one city or one area of the country. Nationwide, a massive problem of racial injustice exists in the criminal justice system, and many symbols reflect this reality.

In defense of their actions, police officials typically contend that race is only one factor in determining why individuals are questioned or detained as they go about everyday activities such as driving a car or walking down the street. By contrast, equal-justice advocacy groups argue that differential

treatment of minority-group members amounts to a race-based double standard, which they believe exists not only in police work but also throughout the criminal justice system.

In recent years, this situation has slowly begun to change. Slightly less than 25 percent of all *sworn officers*—those who have taken an oath and been given the powers to make arrests and use necessary force in accordance with their duties—are women and minorities. Nationwide, there were about 686,665 sworn officers in 2018. In 2018 women accounted for about 12.6 percent of all sworn officers, as compared to 87.4 percent male officers. The largest percentages of women and minority police officers are located in cities with a population of 250,000 or more. African Americans make up a larger percentage of the police department in cities with a larger proportion of African American residents (such as Detroit), and Latinx constitute a larger percentage in cities such as San Antonio and El Paso, Texas, where Latinx make up a larger proportion of the population. Women officers of all races are more likely to be employed in departments in cities of more than 250,000 as compared with smaller communities (cities of fewer than 50,000), where women officers constitute a small percentage of the force.

Despite the fact that more police departments are now placing greater emphasis on *community-oriented policing*—an approach to law enforcement that focuses on police officers building ties to the community by working closely with other community members, the killing of unarmed citizens, often young men of color, by law enforcement officials has created massive divisions in communities and throughout the nation. Distrust of police officers is at an all-time high and each time a new violent incident occurs between an

criminal justice system

the local, state, and federal agencies that enforce laws, adjudicate crimes, and treat and rehabilitate criminals.



Spencer Platt/Getty Images

FIGURE 6.22 In the aftermath of sniper-style ambush killings of five Dallas police officers and the wounding of seven more, a patrol car was placed outside Dallas police headquarters as a makeshift memorial to the fallen officers. Tensions remain high across the country between law enforcement officers and some of the communities to which they are assigned.

armed officer and an unarmed individual, the pressure mounts in cities, sometime provoking protests and even riots in the streets.

The Courts

Criminal courts determine the guilt or innocence of those persons accused of committing a crime. In theory, justice is determined in an adversarial process in which the prosecutor (an attorney who represents the state) argues that the accused is guilty and the defense attorney asserts that the accused is innocent. In reality, judges have considerable discretion but are still constrained in some cases by *structured-sentencing* guidelines. Structured sentencing is also referred to as *determinate sentencing* or *mandatory sentencing*. A determinate sentence sets the term of imprisonment at a fixed period of time (such as three years) for a specific offense. Mandatory-sentencing guidelines are established by law and require that a person convicted of a specific offense or series of offenses be given a penalty within a fixed range. Although these practices limit judicial discretion in sentencing, many critics are concerned about other negative effects that these sentencing approaches may have on the accused and the criminal justice system.

Prosecuting attorneys also have considerable leeway in deciding which cases to prosecute and when to negotiate a plea bargain with a defense attorney. As cases are sorted through the legal machinery, a steady attrition occurs. At

each stage, various officials determine what alternatives will be available for those cases still remaining in the system.

About 90 percent of criminal cases are never tried in court; instead, they are resolved by plea bargaining, a process in which the prosecution negotiates a reduced sentence for the accused in exchange for a guilty plea. Defendants (especially those who are poor and cannot afford to pay an attorney) may be urged to plead guilty to a lesser crime in return for not being tried for the more serious crime for which they were arrested. Prison sentences given in plea bargains vary widely from one region to another and even from judge to judge within one state.

Those who advocate the practice of plea bargaining believe that it allows for individualized justice for alleged offenders because judges, prosecutors, and defense attorneys can agree to a plea and to a punishment that best fits the offense and the offender. They also believe that this process helps reduce the backlog of criminal cases in the court system as well as the lengthy process often involved in a criminal trial. However, those who seek to abolish plea bargaining believe that this practice leads to innocent people pleading guilty to crimes they have not committed or pleading guilty to a crime other than the one they actually committed because they are offered a lesser sentence. More serious crimes, such as murder, felonious assault, and rape, are more likely to proceed to trial than other forms of criminal conduct; however, many of these cases do not reach the trial stage (■ Figure 6.23).



FIGURE 6.23 Although TV and movie crime dramas often prominently feature a judge and jury in a courtroom, about 90 percent of criminal cases are never tried in court. Nevertheless, jury duty is considered to be an important civic responsibility for citizens to perform so that those who are accused have their case heard by a jury of their peers.

One of the most important activities of the court system is establishing the sentence of the accused after he or she has been found guilty or has pleaded guilty. Typically, sentencing involves the following kinds of sentences or dispositions: fines, probation, alternative or intermediate sanctions (such as house arrest or electronic monitoring), incarceration, and capital punishment. However, adult courts operate differently from those established for juvenile offenders.

Juvenile Courts Juvenile courts were established under a different premise than courts for adults. Under the doctrine of *parens patriae* (the state as parent), the official purpose of juvenile courts has been to care for, rather than punish, youthful offenders. In theory, less weight is given to offenses and more weight to a youth's physical, mental, or social condition. The juvenile court seeks to change or resocialize offenders through treatment or therapy, not to punish them. Consequently, judges in juvenile courts are given relatively wide latitude, or discretion, in the decisions they mete out regarding young offenders.

Unlike adult offenders, juveniles are not always represented by legal counsel. A juvenile hearing is not a trial but rather an informal private hearing before a judge or probation officer, with only the young person and a parent or guardian present. No jury is convened, and the juvenile offender does not cross-examine his or her accusers. In addition, the offender is not "sentenced"; rather, the case is "adjudicated" or "disposed of." Finally, the offender is not "punished" but instead may be "remanded to the custody" of a youth authority in order to receive training, treatment, or care.

Because of judicial discretion, courts may treat juveniles differently based on gender. Considerable disparity

exists in the disposition of juvenile cases, with much of the variation thought to result from judges' beliefs rather than objective facts in the case. Female offenders are more likely than males to be institutionalized for committing status offenses such as truancy, running away from home, and other offenses that serve as "buffer charges" for suspected sexual misconduct.

Disparity also exists on the basis of race and class. Judges tend to see youths from white, middle- or upper-class families as being very much like their children and to believe that the families will take care of the problem on their own. They may view juveniles from lower-income families or other racial-ethnic groups as delinquents in need of attention from authorities. Furthermore, some judges view gang members

from impoverished central cities as "guilty by association" because of their companions.

The political climate may also have an effect on how judges dispose of juvenile cases. In the process of dealing with the public perception that the juvenile justice system is too lenient, some judges may have inadvertently contributed to other problems. Many more youths have been remanded to overcrowded juvenile detention facilities that are unable to provide necessary educational, health, and social services. Based on a judge's discretion, many juvenile offenders are incarcerated under indeterminate sentences and placed in a detention facility that may serve merely as a school for adult criminality.

During the Trump administration, the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention has changed its approach to young people in the criminal justice system. According to reports from various advocacy groups, a more punitive approach is now being taken to juvenile justice. Terms such as *justice-involved youth* have been replaced by the more adult term of *offender*. Administration officials, including President Donald J. Trump, have referred to some unaccompanied minors and other justice-involved youth as members of the MS-13 gang when there has been no evidence of such membership existing (Rainey, 2018). It remains to be seen what the official stance toward youthful offenders will be, compared to adult offenders, in the future.

Punishment and Corrections

Although the United States makes up less than 5 percent of the world's population, our nation accounts for about 22 percent of the world's prison population. Some analysts

suggest that our laws prescribe greater punishment for some offenses than those in other nations, resulting in Americans being locked up for crimes that would rarely result in prison sentences in other countries. In 2017 the U.S. prison population was 1.5 million persons, and the population of jail inmates was about 745,000 persons (the latest data available at the time of this writing). The U.S. Department of Justice (2019) reported that jail and prison incarceration rates had decreased by more than 10 percent between 2007 and 2017. It should be noted that jails differ from prisons. Most jails are run by local governments or a sheriff's department. They are designed to hold people before they make bail, when they are awaiting trial, or when they are serving short sentences for committing a misdemeanor. By contrast, prisons are operated by state governments and the Federal Bureau of Prisons and are designed to hold individuals convicted of felonies. Some prisons are operated by private contractors that build and control the facilities while receiving public monies for their operation. About 8 percent of all state and federal prisoners were serving time in privately operated prison facilities, which held more than 120,000 prisoners in 2017.

Despite reductions in incarceration rates, wide differences exist in rates across various racial and ethnic categories. For example, the imprisonment rate for sentenced African American males was more than twice the rate for sentenced Hispanic males and almost six times that for sentenced white males in 2017. To put this into actual numbers: there were 2,336 per 100,000 African American males incarcerated as compared to 1,054 per 100,000 Hispanic males and 397 per 100,000 white males. Likewise, the rate for sentenced African American females was almost double that for sentenced white females. In numbers, this means there were 92 per 100,000 African American females compared to 49 per 100,000 white females (U.S. Department of Justice, 2019). These disparities have deep roots in racial injustice and inequalities in the criminal justice system that have existed throughout U.S. history and remain far from reduced or solved.

Punishment is any action designed to deprive a person of things of value (including liberty) because of some offense the person is thought to have committed. Historically, punishment has had four major goals:

1. *Retribution* is punishment that a person receives for infringing on the rights of others. Retribution imposes a penalty on the offender and is based on the premise that the punishment should fit the crime: The greater the degree of social harm, the more the offender should be punished. For example, an individual who murders should be punished more severely than one who shoplifts.
2. *General deterrence* seeks to reduce criminal activity by instilling a fear of punishment in the general public. However, we most often focus on *specific deterrence*, which inflicts punishment on individual criminals to discourage them from committing future crimes. Recently, criminologists have debated whether

imprisonment has a deterrent effect, given the fact that high rates (between 30 and 50 percent) of those who are released from prison become recidivists (previous offenders who commit new crimes).

3. *Incapacitation* is based on the assumption that offenders who are detained in prison or are executed will be unable to commit additional crimes. This approach is often expressed as “lock ‘em up and throw away the key.” In recent years, more emphasis has been placed on *selective incapacitation*, which means that offenders who repeat certain kinds of crimes are sentenced to long prison terms.
4. *Rehabilitation* seeks to return offenders to the community as law-abiding citizens by providing therapy or vocational or educational training. Based on this approach, offenders are treated, not punished, so that they will not continue their criminal activity. However, many correctional facilities are seriously understaffed and underfunded in the rehabilitation programs that exist. The job skills (such as agricultural work) that many offenders learn in prison do not transfer to the outside world, nor are offenders given any assistance in finding work that fits their skills once they are released.

Other approaches have also been advocated for dealing with criminal behavior. Key among these is the idea of *restoration*, which is designed to repair the damage done to the victim and the community by an offender's criminal act. This approach is based on the *restorative justice perspective*, which states that the criminal justice system should promote a peaceful and just society; therefore, the system should focus on peacemaking rather than on punishing offenders. Advocates of this approach believe that the punishment of offenders actually encourages crime rather than deters it and are in favor of approaches such as probation with treatment. Opponents of this approach suggest that increased punishment of offenders leads to lower crime rates and that the restorative justice approach amounts to “coddling criminals.” However, some restorative justice programs are now in operation and have been found to reduce recidivism rates below more conventional criminal justice sanctions.

Instead of the term *punishment*, the term *corrections* is often used. It refers not only to prisons and jails but also to a number of programs and organizations that manage individuals who have been either accused or convicted of crimes. Included in the field of corrections are halfway houses, probation, work release and education programs, parole supervision, counseling, and community service.

The Death Penalty

For many years, capital punishment, or the death penalty, has been used in the United States as an appropriate and justifiable response to very serious crimes. In 2018, twenty-five inmates were executed (as contrasted with thirty-five in 2014 and ninety-eight in 1999), and 2,721 people awaited

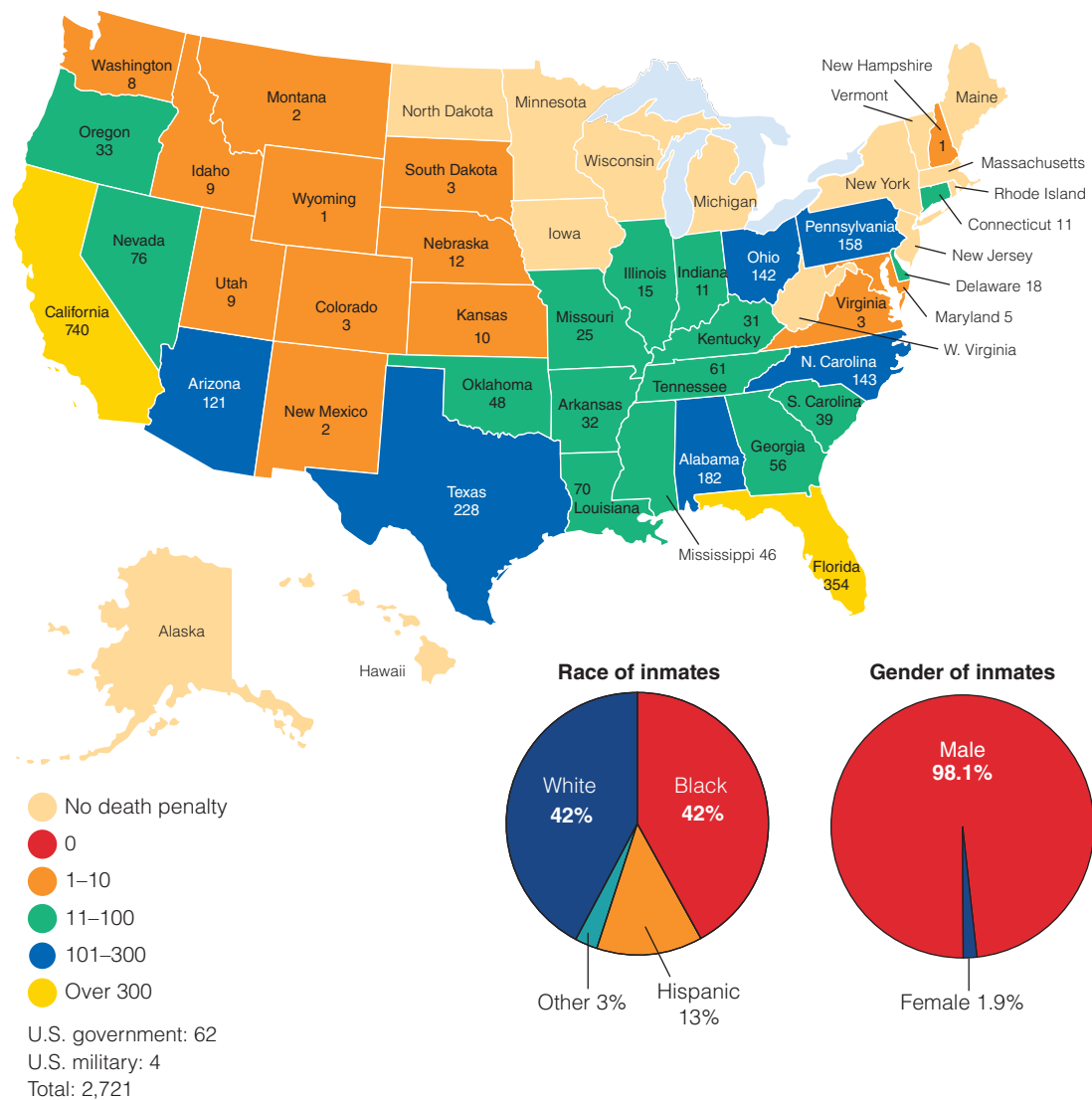


FIGURE 6.24 Death-Row Census, May 31, 2019

Death-row inmates are heavily concentrated in certain states.

Source: Death Penalty Information Center, 2019.

execution, having received the death penalty under federal law or the laws of one of the states that have the death penalty (Death Penalty Information Center, 2019). By far, the largest numbers of death-row inmates are in states such as California, Florida, Texas, Alabama, and Pennsylvania (see ■Figure 6.24).

Because of the finality of the death penalty, it has been a subject of much controversy and numerous Supreme Court debates about the decision-making process involved in capital cases. In 1972 the U.S. Supreme Court ruled (in *Furman v. Georgia*) that *arbitrary* application of the death penalty violates the Eighth Amendment to the Constitution but that the death penalty itself is not unconstitutional. In other words, capital punishment is legal if it is fairly imposed. Although there have been a number of cases involving death-penalty issues before the Supreme Court since that time, the court typically has upheld the constitutionality

of this practice. Yet the fact remains that racial disparities are highly evident in the profiles of those on death row and those executed (Death Penalty Information Center, 2019).

Some people who have lost relatives and friends as a result of criminal activity may see the death penalty as justified. However, capital punishment raises many doubts for those who fear that innocent individuals may be executed for crimes they did not commit. According to the Death Penalty Information Center (2019), about 165 individuals have been released from death row since 1973 based on evidence that was later presented to demonstrate

punishment

any action designed to deprive a person of things of value (including liberty) because of some offense the person is thought to have committed.

their innocence. For still other people, the problem of racial discrimination in the sentencing process poses troubling questions. Other questions involve the execution of persons with mental disabilities and those defendants who did not have effective legal counsel during their trial. In 2002, for example, the Supreme Court ruled (in *Atkins v. Virginia*) that executing the “mentally retarded” is unconstitutional. (This is the terminology used in the ruling.) In another landmark case (*Ring v. Arizona*), the court ruled that juries, not judges, must decide whether a convicted murderer should receive the death penalty.

Executions resumed in 2008 after a de facto moratorium was lifted by the Supreme Court when it decided to uphold lethal injection as not constituting “cruel and unusual punishment” despite the fact that some scientists disagree. Although only twenty-five death sentences were handed down in 2018 (after a high of 328 in 1994), the issue of the death penalty is far from resolved; the debate, which has taken place for more than two centuries, will no doubt continue for many years in the future.

Looking Ahead: Deviance and Crime in the Future

Three pressing questions pertaining to deviance and crime will continue to face us in the future: Is the solution to our “crime problem” more law and order? Is equal justice under the law possible? Is more stringent gun control the way to reduce violent crime in the United States? (See the “Sociology and Social Policy” box for this discussion.)

Although many people in the United States agree that crime is one of the most important problems in this country, they are divided over what to do about it. Some of the frustration about crime might be based on unfounded fears; studies show that the *overall* crime rate has been decreasing slightly in recent years.

One thing is clear: The existing criminal justice system cannot solve the “crime problem.” If only a small percentage of all crimes result in arrest, and even a smaller percentage of those lead to a conviction in serious cases, and even less than 5 percent of those result in a jail term, the “lock ‘em up and throw away the key” approach has little chance of succeeding. Nor does the high rate of recidivism among those who have been incarcerated speak well for the rehabilitative efforts of our existing correctional facilities. Reducing street crime may hinge on finding ways to short-circuit criminal behavior. Likewise, if corporate elites and wealthy offenders continue to get away with crimes that leave their employees and millions of others without their homes, pensions, and life savings, not only individuals and families but also the entire nation will continue to suffer from the consequences of misplaced priorities and a system that benefits the few

at the expense of the law-abiding many who attempt to follow the rules and adhere to the system that they have been socialized to accept.

One of the greatest challenges is juvenile offenders, who may become the adult criminals of tomorrow. However, instead of military-style boot camps or other stopgap measures, *structural solutions*—such as more and better education and jobs, affordable housing, more equality and less discrimination, and socially productive activities—are needed to reduce street crime. In the past, structural solutions such as these have made it possible for youths who initially committed street crimes to leave the streets, get jobs, and lead productive lives. Ultimately, the best approach for reducing delinquency and crime would be prevention: to work with young people *before* they become juvenile offenders to help them establish family relationships, build self-esteem, choose a career, and get an education that will help them pursue that career. Criminologist Steven E. Barkan (2012) proposes seven strategies for reducing crime and delinquency that are structural in nature:

1. Create decent jobs that pay a living wage.
2. Provide economic aid for people who are unemployed or are barely making it.
3. End racial segregation in housing.
4. Strengthen social integration and social institutions in urban neighborhoods.
5. Reduce housing and population density.
6. Change male socialization.
7. Reduce economic inequality.

Many people still ask if equal justice under the law is possible. As long as racism, sexism, classism, and ageism exist in our society, many individuals will see deviant and criminal behavior through a selective lens. To solve the problems addressed in this chapter, we must ask ourselves what we can do to ensure the rights of everyone, including the poor, people of color, and women and men alike. Many of us can counter classism, racism, sexism, and ageism where they occur. Perhaps the only way that the United States can have equal justice under the law (and, perhaps, less crime as a result) in the future is to promote social justice for individuals regardless of their race, class, gender, or age.

The Future of Transnational Crime and the Global Criminal Economy

Transnational crime occurs across multiple national borders. This type of crime not only involves crossing borders between countries but also crimes in which crossing national borders is essential to the criminal activity. Much of transnational crime is conducted by organized criminal

The Eternal Political War over Gun Control

The only thing that stops a bad guy with a gun is a good guy with a gun.

—Comment by a National Rifle Association (NRA) executive when there was great public demand for more effective gun control in the aftermath of the Sandy Hook Elementary School mass shooting in Newtown, Connecticut (qtd. in Gold and Mason, 2012)

For many years, opponents of gun-control measures have argued that additional regulations will not curb random violence perpetrated by a few disturbed or frustrated individuals and that more, rather than fewer, people need to be armed to protect others against future mass violence. Organizations such as the NRA have argued that schoolteachers, professors, and some public officials should be armed so that they might better control the chaos that ensues with each school shooting. By contrast, gun-control advocates argue that we need better laws and policies that regulate the gun industry and gun ownership. The movement for better gun control has increasingly been led by young people, such as student survivors of the 2018 Stoneman Douglas High School mass shooting in Parkland, Florida, where a gunman with a semi-automatic rifle entered the school and killed seventeen people and injured seventeen others. Sadly, a year after the Parkland shooting, NPR/PBS reported that their poll found that the percentage of Americans who thought laws covering the sale of firearms should be stricter continued to drop, from 71 percent to 51 percent, after the urgency of the Parkland shootings had declined (npr.org, 2019).

Some people view social policy as a means of “declaring war” on a problem such as school violence. Social policy discussions on gun-related violence typically focus on how to win the “war” on guns and how to keep violent incidents from happening again. However, a lack of consensus exists on both the causes of gun violence and what should be done about it. Some favor regulation of the gun industry and

gun ownership; others believe that additional regulations will not curb random violence perpetrated by individuals.

Underlying the arguments for and against gun control are these words from the Second Amendment to the U.S. Constitution: “A well regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear Arms, shall not be infringed.” Those in favor of legislation to regulate the gun industry and gun ownership argue that the Second Amendment does not guarantee an individual’s right to own guns: The right to keep and bear arms applies only to those citizens who do so as part of an official state militia. However, in 2008 the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in *District of Columbia v. Heller* that the Second Amendment protects an individual’s right to own a gun for personal use. From this perspective, individuals possess a constitutionally protected right to have a loaded gun at home for self-defense. This argument has been made for many years by the National Rifle Association (NRA), one of the most powerful interest groups in Washington and in legislatures across the nation. The NRA has stated that gun-control regulations violate the individual’s constitutional right to own a gun. The NRA’s response to recent school violence has been to call for armed guards in all schools.

What solutions exist for the quandary over gun regulations? Declaring war on gun-related violence is difficult because it is virtually impossible to rally our political leaders and the general public behind a single policy. Instead, time is spent arguing over how to proceed and how to identify the real enemy, and gun violence remains a chronic concern in the United States. Clearly, this is an issue in which we have yet to successfully address a pressing problem that is continuing to take precious lives in this nation.

Reflect & Analyze

Do you believe that arming more people would reduce mass shootings in the United States? Should armed guards be placed in all schools? Should college students be allowed to carry guns on campus for their own safety? What do you think?

groups that use systematic violence and corruption to achieve their goals. Often these criminal networks are able to prey on less powerful governments that do not have the resources to oppose them.

Transnational crime is fueled by globalization, which has brought increased travel, expanded international trade, and advances in telecommunications and computer technology. This type of criminal activity cannot be controlled by one nation alone. How much money

and other resources change hands in the global criminal economy? Although the exact amount of profits and movement of money originating in the global criminal economy is impossible to determine, the United Nations Conference on Global Organized Crime estimated that more than \$600 billion (in U.S. currency) per year is accrued in the global trade in drugs alone. Profits from all kinds of global criminal activities are estimated to be as high as \$5 trillion per year (United Nations Development

Programme, 2011). Some analysts believe that even this figure may underestimate the true nature and extent of the global criminal economy. The highest-income-producing activities of global criminal organizations include trafficking in drugs, weapons, and nuclear material; smuggling of things and people (including migrants); trafficking in women and children for the sex industry; and trafficking in body parts such as corneas and major organs for the medical industry. Undergirding the entire criminal system are money-laundering and various complex financial schemes and international trade networks that make it possible for people to use the resources they obtain through illegal activity for the purposes of consumption and investment in the formal (“legitimate”) economy. The theft of critical U.S. intellectual property, including intrusions into corporate computer networks, makes this country more vulnerable to significant business losses. Cybercrime poses a threat to banking, stock markets, and credit-card services, just as penetration of intelligence services makes nations more vulnerable to terrorism. (■ Figure 6.25).

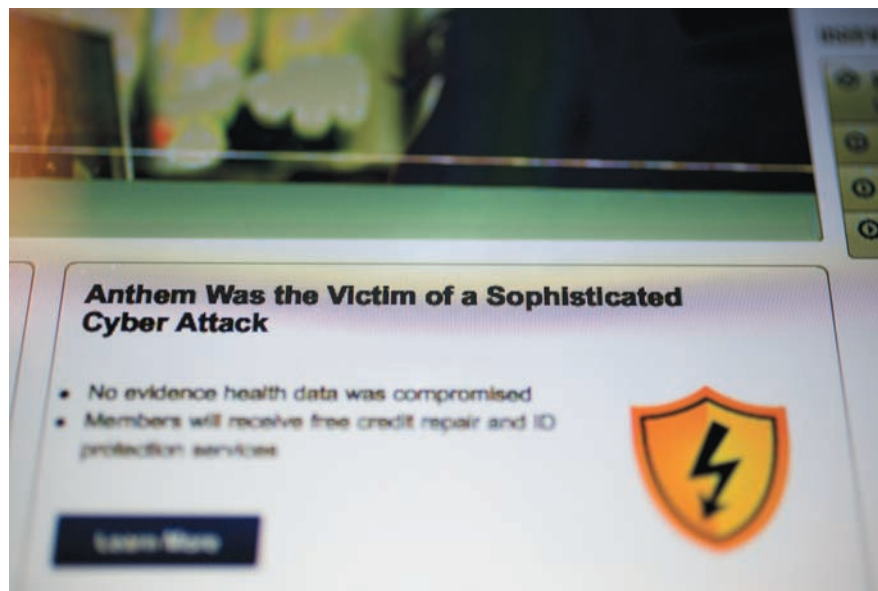
Can anything be done about transnational crime? The United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime (2014) suggests that specific steps must be taken: (1) coordination at the international level for identifying, investigating, and prosecuting the people and groups behind the crimes; (2) education and raising awareness about these kinds of crimes and how they affect individuals’ everyday lives; (3) intelligence and technology to help law enforcement officials combat powerful criminal networks; and

(4) assistance for developing countries to help them build their capacity for countering terrorist threats.

In the United States, the White House has also developed a strategy to combat transnational organized crime that focuses on strengthening enforcement of federal law in order to thwart transnational criminal organizations such as criminal gangs, cartels, racketeering organizations, and other groups that engage in activities that threaten public safety and national security (whitehouse.gov, 2017). Examples include illegal smuggling, and trafficking of humans, drugs, or other illegal substances, wildlife, and weapons. Also, federal agencies are to focus on corruption, cybercrime, fraud, financial crimes, intellectual-property theft, and the illegal concealment or transfer of proceeds that have been derived from illicit activities such as these (whitehouse.gov, 2017).

From this perspective, the demand for illegal drugs in the United States fuels the global drug trade, which is a key source of funding for transnational organized crime. If this source can be reduced or cut off, this will be a beginning toward reducing problems of terrorism and insurgent networks.

Will the United States and other nations be able to curb transnational organized crime? This remains to be seen; however, public safety, public health, democratic institutions, and economic stability rely on the ability of the U.S. government and others to combat networks that pose a strategic threat to Americans and U.S. interests. Crime around the world, as well as at home, can be a destabilizing influence on the social order.



Andrew Hurrell/Bloomberg/Getty Images

FIGURE 6.25 One of a growing number of cyberattacks was reported to the FBI by Anthem, Inc., the second largest U.S. health insurer, when hackers obtained data on tens of millions of current and former customers and employees from Anthem’s IT system.

Q&A Chapter Review

Use these questions and answers to check how well you've achieved the learning objectives set out at the beginning of this chapter.

LO1 What is deviance, and when is deviant behavior considered a crime?

Deviance is any behavior, belief, or condition that violates significant social norms in the society or group in which it occurs. Some forms of deviant behavior violate the criminal law, which defines the behaviors that society labels as criminal. Sociologists are interested in what types of behavior are defined by societies as “deviant,” who does that defining, how individuals become deviant, and how those individuals are dealt with by society.

LO2 What are the key functionalist perspectives on deviance?

Functionalist perspectives on deviance include strain theory and opportunity theory. Strain theory focuses on the idea that when people are denied legitimate access to cultural goals, such as a good job or a nice home, they may engage in illegal behavior to obtain them. Opportunity theory suggests that for deviance to occur, people must have access to illegitimate means to acquire what they want but cannot obtain through legitimate means.

LO3 What are the key ideas of conflict explanations of deviance and crime that focus on power relations, capitalism, feminism, and the intersection of race, class, and gender?

Conflict theorists who focus on power relations in society suggest that the lifestyles considered deviant by political and economic elites are often defined as illegal. Marxist conflict theorists link deviance and crime to a capitalist society, which divides people into haves and have-nots, leaving crime as the only source of support for those at the bottom of the economic ladder. Feminist approaches to deviance focus on the relationship between gender and deviance. Multiracial feminist approaches have examined how the intersecting systems of race, class, and gender act as “structuring forces” that affect how people act, what opportunities they have available, and how their behavior is socially defined.

LO4 What are some key symbolic interactionist perspectives on deviance, including differential association theory, social bond theory, and labeling theory?

According to symbolic interactionists, deviance is learned through interaction with others. Differential association theory states that individuals have a greater tendency to deviate from societal norms when they frequently associate with persons who tend toward deviance instead of

conformity. According to social control theories, everyone is capable of committing crimes, but social bonding (attachments to family and to other social institutions) keeps many from doing so. According to labeling theory, deviant behavior is that which is labeled deviant by those in powerful positions.

LO5 How do postmodern perspectives on deviance differ from other theoretical approaches?

Postmodernist views on deviance focus on how the powerful control others through discipline and surveillance. This control may be maintained through largely invisible forces such as the panopticon, as described by Michel Foucault, or by newer technologies that place everyone—not just “deviants”—under constant surveillance by authorities, who use their knowledge as power over others.

LO6 How do sociologists define the following types of crime: violent crime, property crime, public order crime, occupational and corporate crime, Internet crime, organized crime, and political crime?

Violent crime consists of actions involving force or the threat of force against others. Property crimes include burglary, motor-vehicle theft, larceny-theft, and arson. Public order crimes involve an illegal action voluntarily engaged in by the participants, such as prostitution. Occupational crime comprises illegal activities committed by people in the course of their employment or financial affairs. Corporate crime consists of illegal acts committed by corporate employees on behalf of the corporation and with its support. Internet crime includes FBI-related scams, identity theft, advance fee fraud, nonauction/nondelivery of merchandise, and overpayment fraud. Organized crime is a business operation that supplies illegal goods and services for profit. Political crime refers to illegal or unethical acts involving the usurpation of power by government officials or illegal/unethical acts perpetrated against the government by outsiders seeking to make a political statement, undermine the government, or overthrow it.

LO7 Why may official statistics not be a good indicator of how many crimes are committed, particularly in regard to factors such as age, race, gender, and class?

Official crime statistics are taken from the Uniform Crime Report (UCR), which lists crimes reported to the police, and the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS), which interviews households to determine the incidence of crimes, including those not reported to police. Studies show

that many more crimes are committed than are officially reported. Age is the key factor in crime statistics. Younger people are more likely to have the highest criminal victimization rates. Older adults tend to be fearful of crime but are the least likely to be victimized. Males are arrested for significantly more crimes than females. Persons from lower socioeconomic backgrounds are more likely to be arrested for violent and property crimes; white-collar crime is more likely to occur among the upper socioeconomic classes and to have lighter, or no, prison sentences imposed.

LO8 What are the components of the criminal justice system and the goals of punishment?

The criminal justice system refers to the local, state, and federal agencies that enforce laws, adjudicate crimes, and treat and rehabilitate criminals. The system includes the police, courts, correctional facilities, and people employed in police agencies, courts, prosecutorial agencies, correctional institutions, and probation and parole departments. Historically, punishment has had four major goals: retribution, general deterrence, incapacitation, and rehabilitation.

Key Terms

corporate crime 167	juvenile delinquency 154	secondary deviance 163
crime 154	labeling theory 163	social bond theory 162
criminal justice system 174	occupational (white-collar) crime 167	social control 154
criminology 155	organized crime 168	strain theory 156
deviance 152	political crime 169	terrorism 170
differential association theory 161	primary deviance 163	tertiary deviance 163
illegitimate opportunity structures 157	property crimes 166	victimless crimes 166
Internet crime 168	punishment 178	violent crime 165
	rational choice theory of deviance 161	

Questions for Critical Thinking

- 1 Why does the crime rate fluctuate in the United States? How might we use sociology to explain the fact that the crime rate has not increased dramatically even at times when we have had financial slowdowns or other crises in the United States or other nations' economies?
- 2 Should so-called victimless crimes, such as prostitution and recreational drug use, be decriminalized? Do these crimes harm society? If so, how?
- 3 As a sociologist armed with a sociological imagination, how would you propose to deal with reducing the problem of crime in the United States and around the world?

Answers to **Sociology Quiz**

Violence and Guns in the United States

1	False	Looking at long-term trends, violent crime rates have fallen in the United States over the past twenty-five years. For example, FBI statistics show that the violent crime rate fell 51 percent between 1993 and 2018.
2	True	Aggravated assaults in recent years accounted for the highest number (about 65 percent) of violent crimes reported to law enforcement officials.
3	True	FBI data show that firearms are used in almost 75 percent of the nation's murders.
4	False	According to FBI reports, the rate of property crime declined between 2017 and 2018. Overall, there was an 11.9 percent decrease in burglaries, 5.4 percent decrease in larceny theft, and 3.1 percent decrease in motor-vehicle theft.
5	False	The South is the most violent region in the United States.
6	True	States with weaker gun laws also have a higher rate of gun deaths in proportion to the overall population in that state.
7	True	States with the weakest gun-control laws lead the nation each year in gun deaths, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's National Center for Injury Prevention and Control.
8	False	The rate of violent victimization reported to the police has declined annually between 1993 and 2019.

Sources: Based on Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), 2019e; Morgan and Oudeker, 2019.

EQUAL PAY
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EQUAL WORK





Class and Stratification in the United States

7

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- 1 Describe** the concept of social stratification and the systems of stratification.
- 2 Explain** Karl Marx's views on social class.
- 3 Discuss** Max Weber's analysis of social class.
- 4 Compare** the contemporary sociological models of class structure in the United States.
- 5 Discuss** the prevalence of income inequality and wealth inequality in the United States.
- 6 Explain** the consequences of income inequality and wealth inequality in the United States.
- 7 Discuss** the key aspects of poverty in the United States.
- 8 Compare** the major sociological explanations of social inequality in the United States.
- 9 Discuss** the future of the U.S. system of social stratification.

Joe Raedle/Getty Images News/Getty Images

SOCIOLOGY & **Everyday Life**

The Power of Class

When they were ten years old, the middle-class youth [in my study] seemed worldly, blasé, and hard to impress. For them, pizza parties were very common and thus no special treat. Spring concerts drew shrugs. . . . Although the working-class and poor children were the same age as the middle-class children, they seemed younger, bouncier, and more childlike. They smiled broadly while on stage for the spring concert, were ecstatic over a pizza party, and entertained themselves for hours on weekends and evenings. Ten years later, the pattern had reversed: it was the middle-class youth who seemed younger. Now college students, they were excited about the way the world was opening up for them. . . . By contrast, the working-class and poor youth were generally working full-time in jobs they did not like, and they had various pressing responsibilities such as raising children, paying for food and board, and making monthly car payments. . . . [A]s the children moved from fourth grade into adulthood, the power of class pushed their lives in such different directions that I could not pose the same interview questions to the group as a whole. Middle-class youths' interviews were filled with questions about their college preparation classes, college searches, college choice,

and college adjustment. . . . Working-class and poor youths' interviews were filled with discussions of their difficulties in high school, challenges and work, and uncertain future goals. . . . The follow-up study suggests that over time the gap that existed between the families when the children were ten widened rather than narrowed. . . . [I]t is important to recognize



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How does class affect young people?

People living in the United States want to achieve the American Dream. What is the American Dream? Simply stated, the American Dream is the belief that if people work hard and play by the rules, they will have a chance to get ahead. Moreover, each generation will be able to have a higher standard of living than that of its parents. The American Dream is based on the assumption that people in the United States have equality of opportunity regardless of their race, creed, color, national origin, gender, or religion. Throughout the history of this country, people have aspired to have more than their parents and grandparents. Young people from lower-income and poverty-level families are no exception. Upward mobility in the U.S. class system has been linked to opportunities in education and employment. However, recent national and global economic trends have made it more difficult for many people to achieve their dream.

Some research on the American Dream has shown that many people believe the country is headed in the wrong direction (Cannon and Bevan, 2019). Individuals surveyed in these polls indicated that they believe public institutions, political parties, educational systems, major corporations, and other private organizations are all failing them. This fact is very important for the future of today's children. Sociologist Annette Lareau (2011) studied the social-class origins of children and found that these origins have a powerful and long-term effect on a young person: More affluent parents typically are better able to orchestrate their children's lives in settings such as schools.

From a sociological perspective, this issue of class-based inequalities experienced by individuals brings us to a larger, macrolevel question in studying class and stratification in the United States: Can everyone achieve the American Dream? The way a society is stratified (arranged from top to bottom) has a major influence on a person's position in the class structure. In fact, growing income and wealth divides between the rich and the rest of the people in the United States have truly dampened the belief of some individuals that the American Dream still exists in this nation. According to a 2019 survey by RealClear Opinion Research, nearly four times as many respondents stated that the American Dream is "alive and well" for them personally (27 percent) as compared to individuals who stated that the Dream is "dead" (7 percent). However, most people responding to the survey took the middle ground: Two-thirds stated that the American Dream "is under moderate to severe duress"; 37 percent stated it is "alive and under threat"; and 28 percent stated that the Dream is "under serious threat, but there is still hope" (Cannon and Bevan, 2019). As with all survey research, it depends on whom the respondents were for this study. For example, political party affiliation, age, education, class, location of residence, and many other variables may have been factors in their responses. In this chapter we examine systems of social stratification and describe how the U.S. class system may make it easier for some individuals to attain (or maintain) their American Dream, including holding top positions in society, whereas others have great difficulty moving up from low-income origins or have problems getting into, or staying in, the middle class. But before we

that in American society, people who are blessed with class advantages tend to be unaware of these benefits and privileges. . . . They downplay, or do not even notice, the social class benefits bestowed upon them.

—Sociologist Annette Lareau (2011: 309–310) describing how class influences white and African American children in poor, working-class, and middle-class families as she revisits young people from her earlier study who had moved from fourth grade to adulthood

How Much Do You Know About Wealth, Poverty, and the American Dream?

TRUE	FALSE	
T	F	1 Most adults in the United States believe they have achieved the American Dream.
T	F	2 Individuals over age sixty-five in the United States have the highest rate of poverty.
T	F	3 Compared with other industrialized countries, the United States has one of the highest rates of childhood poverty.
T	F	4 In the United States a family of four is considered by the federal government to be “poor” if the household earns less than \$40,000.
T	F	5 According to media reports, the wealthiest person in the world lives in the United States.
T	F	6 Slavery still exists in the United States.
T	F	7 Some states have set a higher minimum wage than the federal minimum wage.
T	F	8 Over the past fifty years, the gap between those earning the top 1 percent of income and those in the bottom 99 percent of income has decreased significantly.

Answers can be found at the end of the chapter.

explore class and stratification, test your knowledge of wealth, poverty, and the American Dream by taking the “Sociology and Everyday Life” quiz. ●

What Is Social Stratification?

Social stratification is the hierarchical arrangement of large social groups based on their control of basic resources. Stratification involves patterns of structural inequality that are associated with membership in each of these groups, as well as the ideologies that support inequality. Sociologists examine the social groups that make up the hierarchy in a society and seek to determine how inequalities are structured and persist over time.

Max Weber’s term **life chances** refers to the extent to which individuals have access to important societal resources such as food, clothing, shelter, education, and health care. According to sociologists, more affluent people typically have better life chances than the less affluent; they have greater access to quality education, safe neighborhoods, high-quality nutrition and health care, police and private security protection, and an extensive array of other goods and services. In contrast, persons with low and poverty-level incomes tend to have limited access to these resources.

Resources are anything valued in a society, ranging from money and property to medical care and education; resources are considered to be scarce because of their unequal distribution among social categories. If we think about the valued resources available in the United States, for example, the differences in life chances are readily apparent. As one classical analyst suggested, “Poverty narrows and closes life chances. The victims of poverty experience a kind of arteriosclerosis of opportunity. Being poor not only means economic insecurity, it also wreaks havoc on one’s mental and physical health” (Ropers, 1991: 25). About three decades after this statement was made by Ropers, our life chances are still intricately intertwined with our class, race, gender, and age.

All societies distinguish among people by age. Young children typically have less authority and responsibility than older persons. Older persons, especially those without

social stratification

the hierarchical arrangement of large social groups based on their control of basic resources.

life chances

Max Weber’s term for the extent to which individuals have access to important societal resources such as food, clothing, shelter, education, and health care.

wealth or power, may find themselves at the bottom of the social hierarchy. Similarly, all societies differentiate between females and males: Women are often treated as subordinate to men. From society to society, people are also treated differently as a result of their religion, race/ethnicity, appearance, physical strength, disabilities, or other distinguishing characteristics. All of these differentiations result in inequality. However, systems of stratification are also linked to the specific economic and social structure of a society and to a nation's position in the system of *global* stratification, which is so significant for understanding social inequality that we devote the next chapter to this topic.

Systems of Stratification

One of the most important characteristics of systems of stratification is their degree of flexibility. Sociologists distinguish among such systems based on the extent to which they are open or closed. In an *open system*, the boundaries between levels in the hierarchies are more flexible and may be influenced (positively or negatively) by people's achieved statuses. Open systems are assumed to have some degree of social mobility. **Social mobility** is the movement of individuals or groups from one level in a stratification system to another. This movement can be either upward or downward. **Intergenerational mobility** is the social movement experienced by family members from one generation to the next. For example, Sarah's father is a carpenter who makes good wages in good economic times but is often unemployed when the construction industry slows to a standstill. Sarah becomes a neurologist, earning \$350,000 a year, and moves from the working class to the upper-middle class. Between her father's generation and her own, Sarah has experienced upward social mobility.

By contrast, **intragenerational mobility** is the social movement of individuals within their own lifetime. Consider, for example, RaShandra, who began her career as a high-tech factory worker and through increased experience and taking specialized courses in her field became an entrepreneur, starting her own highly successful online business. RaShandra's advancement is an example of upward intragenerational social mobility. However, note that both intragenerational mobility and intergenerational mobility can be downward as well as upward.

In a *closed system*, the boundaries between levels in the hierarchies of social stratification are rigid, and people's positions are set by ascribed status (■ Figure 7.1). Open and closed systems are ideal-type constructs; no actual stratification system is completely open or closed. The systems of stratification that we examine—slavery, caste, and class—are characterized by different hierarchical structures and varying degrees of mobility. Let's examine these three systems of stratification to determine how people acquire their positions in each and what potential for social movement they have.



James Brunker/Alamy Stock Photo

FIGURE 7.1 Max Weber's term *life chances* refers to the extent to which people have access to resources such as food, clothing, shelter, education, and health care. How might the life chances of the people living in these buildings be different?

Slavery

Slavery is an extreme form of stratification in which some people are owned or controlled by others for the purpose of economic or sexual exploitation. It is a closed system in which people designated as "slaves" are treated as property and have little or no control over their lives. Those of us living in the United States are aware of the legacy of slavery in our own country, beginning in the 1600s, when slaves were forcibly imported to the United States as a source of cheap labor. Slavery was defined in law and custom by the 1750s, making it possible for one person to own another person. In fact, early U.S. presidents including George Washington, James Madison, and Thomas Jefferson owned slaves.

As practiced in the United States, slavery had four primary characteristics: (1) it was lifelong and was inherited (children of slaves were considered to be slaves); (2) slaves were considered property, not human beings; (3) slaves were denied rights; and (4) coercion was used to keep slaves "in their place" (Noel, 1972). Although most slaves were powerless to bring about change, some were able to challenge slavery—or at least their position in the system—by engaging in activities such as sabotage,



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intentional carelessness, work slowdowns, or running away from owners and working for the abolition of slavery (Healey, 2002). Despite the fact that slavery officially ended in this country more than a century ago, sociologists such as Patricia Hill Collins (1990) believe that its legacy is deeply embedded in current patterns of prejudice and discrimination against African Americans.

Slavery is not simply an unfortunate historical legacy in American society. The U.S. State Department (2019: 3) has found that many foreigners are brought to the United States every year in some form of slavery: “The United States considers ‘trafficking in persons,’ ‘human trafficking,’ and ‘modern slavery’ to be interchangeable umbrella terms that refer to both sex and labor trafficking.” Other terms also used to describe modern slavery are “involuntary servitude,” “debt bondage,” and “forced labor.” The three main areas of “trafficking” people into the United States for the purpose of enslavement are agricultural slavery, domestic servitude, and sexual exploitation. The problem of global slavery and human-trafficking is so prevalent in the second decade of the twenty-first century that a period called National Slavery and Human Trafficking Prevention Month is set aside to call attention to the problem. This chapter’s “Sociology in Global Perspective” box shows how modern slavery may affect your daily life without you ever knowing it.

The Caste System

Like slavery, caste is a closed system of social stratification. A **caste system** is a system of social inequality in which people’s status is permanently determined at birth based on their parents’ ascribed characteristics. Vestiges of caste

FIGURE 7.2 Systems of stratification include slavery, caste, and class. As shown in these photos, the life chances of people living in each of these systems differ widely.

systems exist in contemporary India and South Africa (■ Figure 7.2).

In India, caste is based in part on occupation; thus, families typically perform the same type of work from generation to generation. By contrast, the caste system of South Africa was based on racial classifications and the belief of white South Africans (Afrikaners) that they were morally superior to the black majority. Until the 1990s,

social mobility

the movement of individuals or groups from one level in a stratification system to another.

intergenerational mobility

the social movement experienced by family members from one generation to the next.

intragenerational mobility

the social movement of individuals within their own lifetime.

slavery

an extreme form of stratification in which some people are owned or controlled by others for the purpose of economic or sexual exploitation.

caste system

a system of social inequality in which people’s status is permanently determined at birth based on their parents’ ascribed characteristics.

SOCIOLOGY IN **Global Perspective**

A Day in Your Life: How Are You Touched by Modern Slavery?

According to the U.S. State Department (2017), many of the things that we enjoy on a daily basis may have been produced or touched by those held in involuntary servitude. Consider this typical day in the life of a person:

6:00 A.M.: Wake Up and Get Ready for Work

The clothes on your back could have been produced by a man, woman, or child in a garment factory in Asia, the Middle East, or Latin America who is subjected to forced labor, including withholding of passports, no pay, long working hours to meet quotas, and physical and sexual abuse. To complete your outfit, the jewelry you put on this morning may include gold mined by trafficked adults and children in Africa, Asia, and Latin America.

8:00 A.M.: Sit Down at Your Desk

The electronics you use may require minerals that are produced in conflict-affected areas of Africa. Children and adults are forced to work in mines and in prostitution in surrounding communities. The smartphone you use may also be produced in Asia by adults and children who have been sold, coerced, or deceived into working in electronics factories and subjected to excessively long hours, minimal or no pay, and violence or threats of violence.

10:00 A.M.: Take a Caffeine Break

The coffee you drink to keep you energized may have been harvested by victims of modern slavery. Some men and children work under conditions of forced labor on coffee plantations in Latin America and Africa. The sugar in that coffee may have also come from plantations where men, women, and children in Latin America, Asia, and Africa are subjected to conditions of forced labor and debt bondage. These victims were also likely exposed to high levels of pesticides and potential injuries from hazardous conditions used to cut sugar cane.

12:00 P.M.: Eat Lunch

The fish you eat may have been caught by men in Southeast Asia or children in West Africa who are subjected to conditions of forced labor in the fishing industry. While catching your lunch, these victims may have been deprived of wages, food, water, and shelter; worked extremely long hours; and suffered physical or sexual abuse.

2:00 P.M.: Afternoon Snack

The chocolate dessert you eat may have been touched by modern slavery, particularly in Africa. Children who work

on plantations that produce cocoa—the key ingredient in chocolate—are subjected to conditions of forced labor.

4:00 P.M.: Drive to Meeting

The tires on the car you drive may be made of rubber produced on plantations in Asia and Africa. Adults and children, including entire families, are forced to work on these plantations for little to no pay, for excessive hours to meet quotas, and in hazardous working conditions.

6:00 P.M.: Arrive at Home

The bricks in the walls of your house may have been produced by bonded labor victims, including men, women, and children, in brick kilns primarily in Asia and Latin America. Children and adults are forced to work in hazardous working conditions in brick kilns for long hours and minimal pay.

8:00 P.M.: Enjoy Dinner

The food you cook and eat for dinner may have been harvested or produced by men, women, and children subjected to forced labor on ranches and farms or in food processing plants in the United States, Latin America, or Africa. These victims work long hours, receive little or no pay, and suffer physical hardship and emotional abuse to herd the cattle or pick the fruits and vegetables that will eventually make it to your dinner table.

11:00 P.M.: Go to Bed

The cotton in your bedroom sheets and your bath towels may have been harvested by men, women, and children in cotton fields, primarily in Central Asia and Africa. Children are forced to leave school to work under arduous and abusive conditions, sometimes with no pay, during annual cotton harvests.

According to the U.S. Department of State, this scenario accounts for only one day. What is the impact of your consumer choices today and over the rest of your life? Take a survey and find out more information and ways to make a difference at www.slaveryfootprint.org.

Reflect & Analyze

Why is it important for us to be aware of human slavery? Is this concern relevant to our daily lives? Is there any relationship between the American Dream and the exploitation of people on a global basis?

the Afrikaners controlled the government, the police, and the military by enforcing *apartheid*—the separation of the races. Blacks were denied full citizenship and restricted to segregated hospitals, schools, residential neighborhoods, and other facilities. Whites held almost

all of the desirable jobs; blacks worked as manual laborers and servants.

In a caste system, marriage is endogamous, meaning that people are allowed to marry only within their own group. In India, parents have traditionally selected marriage

partners for their children. In South Africa, interracial marriage was illegal until 1985.

Cultural beliefs and values sustain caste systems. Hinduism, the primary religion of India, reinforces the caste system by teaching that people should accept their fate in life and work hard as a moral duty. Caste systems grow weaker as societies industrialize; the values reinforcing the system break down, and people start to focus on the types of skills needed for industrialization.

As we have seen, in closed systems of stratification, group membership is hereditary, and it is almost impossible to move up within the structure. Custom and law frequently perpetuate privilege and ensure that higher-level positions are reserved for the children of the advantaged.

The Class System

The **class system** is a type of stratification based on the ownership and control of resources and on the type of work that people do. At least theoretically, a class system is more open than a caste system because the boundaries between classes are less distinct than the boundaries between castes. In a class system, status comes at least partly through achievement rather than entirely by ascription.

In class systems, people may become members of a class other than that of their parents through both intergenerational and intragenerational mobility, either upward or downward. *Horizontal mobility* occurs when people experience a gain or loss in position and/or income that does not produce a change in their place in the class structure. For example, a person may get a pay increase and a more prestigious title but still not move from one class to another.

By contrast, movement up or down the class structure is *vertical mobility*. For example, Bruce is a physician, but he was the first person in his family to attend college, much less to graduate from medical school. His father was a day laborer picked up each day by contractors outside the local lumberyard to work on various building sites. His mother was a stay-at-home mom who took care of Bruce and his four younger siblings. Bruce's parents did not complete high school and had little support from home because their families had limited economic means. In high school, Bruce became involved in the Upward Bound program, which encourages young people to remain in school and provides mentoring, tutoring, and enrichment activities that ultimately helped him achieve his dream.

Bruce's situation reflects upward mobility; however, people may also experience downward mobility, caused by any number of reasons, including a lack of jobs, low wages and employment instability, marriage to someone with fewer resources and less power than oneself, and changing social conditions.

Classical Perspectives on Social Class

Early sociologists grappled with the definition of class and the criteria for determining people's location in the class structure. Both Karl Marx and Max Weber viewed class as

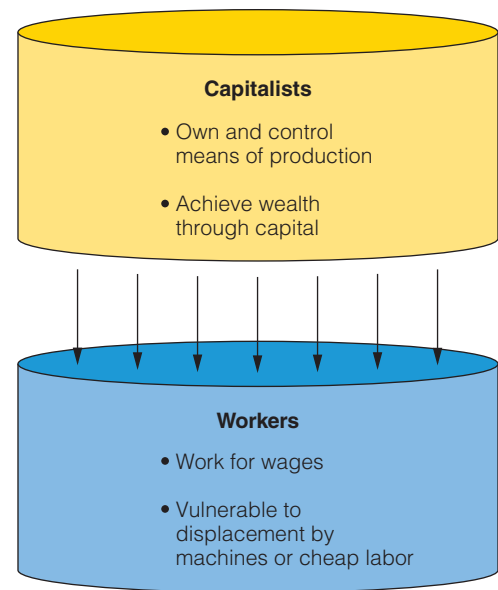


FIGURE 7.3 Marx's View of Stratification

an important determinant of social inequality and social change, and their works have had a profound influence on how we view the U.S. class system today.

Karl Marx: Relationship to the Means of Production

According to Karl Marx, class position and the extent of our income and wealth are determined by our work situation or our relationship to the means of production. As we have previously seen, Marx stated that capitalistic societies consist of two classes—the capitalists and the workers. The **capitalist class (bourgeoisie)** consists of those who own and control the means of production—the land and capital necessary for factories and mines, for example. The **working class (proletariat)** consists of those who must sell their labor to the owners in order to earn enough money to survive (see ■Figure 7.3).

According to Marx, class relationships involve inequality and exploitation. Capitalists maximize their profits by exploiting workers, paying them less than the resale value of what they produce but do not own. This exploitation results in workers' **alienation**—a feeling of powerlessness

class system

a type of stratification based on the ownership and control of resources and on the type of work that people do.

capitalist class (bourgeoisie)

Karl Marx's term for those who own and control the means of production.

working class (proletariat)

Karl Marx's term for those who must sell their labor to the owners in order to earn enough money to survive.

alienation

a feeling of powerlessness and estrangement from other people and from oneself.



Robert K. Chin/Alamy Stock Photo

FIGURE 7.4 Karl Marx believed that class relationships involve inequality and exploitation. How is his idea represented in this photo of workers striking for a \$15 an hour living wage in New York City?

and estrangement from other people and from oneself. In Marx's view, alienation develops as workers manufacture goods that embody their creative talents, but the goods do not belong to them. Workers are also alienated from the work itself because they are forced to perform it in order to live. Because the workers' activities are not their own, they feel self-estrangement. Moreover, workers are separated from others in the factory because they individually sell their labor power to the capitalists as a commodity.

In Marx's view, the capitalist class maintains its position at the top of the class structure by control of the society's *superstructure*, which is composed of the government, schools, churches, and other social institutions that produce and disseminate ideas perpetuating the existing system of exploitation. Marx predicted that the exploitation of workers by the capitalist class would ultimately lead to *class conflict*—the struggle between the capitalist class and the working class. According to Marx, when the workers realized that capitalists were the source of their oppression, they would overthrow the capitalists and their agents of social control, leading to the end of capitalism. The workers would then take over the government and create a more egalitarian society.

Why has no workers' revolution occurred? Capitalism may have persisted because it has changed significantly since Marx's time. Individual capitalists no longer own and control factories and other means of production; today, ownership and control have largely been separated. For example, contemporary transnational corporations are owned by a multitude of stockholders but are run by paid officers and managers. Similarly, many (but by no means all) workers have experienced a rising standard of living, which may have

contributed to a feeling of complacency. During the twentieth century, workers pressed for salary increases and improvements in the workplace through their activism and labor union membership. They also gained more legal protection in the form of workers' rights and benefits such as workers' compensation insurance for job-related injuries and disabilities. For these reasons, and because of myriad other complex factors, the workers' revolution predicted by Marx has not come to pass. However, the failure of his prediction does not mean that his analysis of capitalism and his theoretical contributions to sociology are without validity.

Marx had a number of important insights into capitalist societies. First, he recognized the economic basis of class systems. Second, he noted the relationship between people's social location in the class structure and their values, beliefs, and behavior. Finally, he understood that classes may have opposing (rather than complementary) interests. For example, capitalists' best interests are served by a decrease in labor costs and other expenses and a corresponding increase in profits; workers' best interests are served by well-paid jobs, safe working conditions, and job security (■Figure 7.4).

Max Weber: Wealth, Prestige, and Power

Max Weber's analysis of class builds upon earlier theories of capitalism (particularly those by Marx) and of money (particularly those by Georg Simmel, as discussed in Chapter 1). Living in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Weber was in a unique position to see the transformation that occurred as individual, competitive, entrepreneurial capitalism went through the process of shifting to bureaucratic, industrial, corporate capitalism. As a result, Weber had more opportunity than Marx to see how capitalism changed over time.

Weber agreed with Marx's assertion that economic factors are important in understanding individual and group behavior. However, Weber emphasized that no single factor (such as economic divisions between capitalists and workers) was sufficient for defining the location of categories of people within the class structure. According to Weber, the access that people have to important societal resources (such as economic,



Mark Peterson/Redux

FIGURE 7.5 What level of wealth, power, and prestige do you believe these women have?

social, and political power) is crucial in determining their life chances. To highlight the importance of life chances for categories of people, Weber developed a multidimensional approach to social stratification that reflects the interplay among wealth, prestige, and power. In his analysis of these dimensions of class structure, Weber viewed the concept of “class” as an ideal type (one that can be used to compare and contrast various societies) rather than as a specific social category of “real” people (Bourdieu, 1984).

Wealth is the value of all of a person’s or family’s economic assets, including income, personal property, and income-producing property. Weber placed categories of people who have a similar level of wealth and income in the same class. For example, he identified a privileged commercial class of *entrepreneurs*—wealthy bankers, ship owners, professionals, and merchants who possess similar financial resources. He also described a class of *rentiers*—wealthy individuals who live off their investments and do not have to work. According to Weber, entrepreneurs and rentiers have much in common. Both are able to purchase expensive consumer goods, control other people’s opportunities to acquire wealth and property, and monopolize costly status privileges (such as education) that provide contacts and skills for their children.

Weber divided those who work for wages into two classes: the middle class and the working class. Traditionally, according to this type of classification, the middle class

consists of white-collar workers, public officials, managers, and professionals. The working class consists of skilled, semiskilled, and unskilled workers. As we shall see later, these categories have shifted with the introduction of new technologies and media in the contemporary world economic structure.

The second dimension of Weber’s system of stratification is **prestige**—the respect or regard that a person or status position is given by others. Fame, respect, honor, and esteem are the most common forms of prestige. A person who has a high level of prestige is assumed to receive deferential and respectful treatment from others. Weber suggested that individuals who share a common level of social prestige belong to the same status group regardless of their level of wealth (■ Figure 7.5). They tend to socialize with one another, marry within their own group of social equals, spend

class conflict

Karl Marx’s term for the struggle between the capitalist class and the working class.

wealth

the value of all of a person’s or family’s economic assets, including income, personal property, and income-producing property.

prestige

the respect or regard that a person or status position is given by others.

their leisure time together, and safeguard their status by restricting outsiders' opportunities to join their ranks.

The other dimension of Weber's system is **power**—the ability of people or groups to achieve their goals despite opposition from others. The powerful can shape society in accordance with their own interests and direct the actions of others. According to Weber, bureaucracies hold social power in modern societies; individual power depends on a person's position within the bureaucracy. Weber suggested that the power of modern bureaucracies was so strong that even a workers' revolution (as predicted by Marx) would not lessen social inequality.

Weber stated that wealth, prestige, and power are separate continuums on which people can be ranked from high to low, as shown in ■ Figure 7.6. Individuals may be high on one dimension while being low on another. For example, people may be very wealthy but have little political power (e.g., a recluse who has inherited a large sum of money). They may also have prestige but not wealth (e.g., a college professor who receives teaching excellence awards but lives on a relatively low income). In Weber's multidimensional approach, people are ranked on all three dimensions. Sociologists often use the term **socioeconomic status (SES)** to refer to a combined measure that attempts to classify individuals, families, or households in terms of factors such as income, occupation, and education to determine social class.

What important contribution does Weber make to our understanding of social stratification and class? Weber's analysis of social stratification contributes to our understanding by emphasizing that people behave according to both their economic interests and their values. He also added to Marx's insights by developing a multidimensional

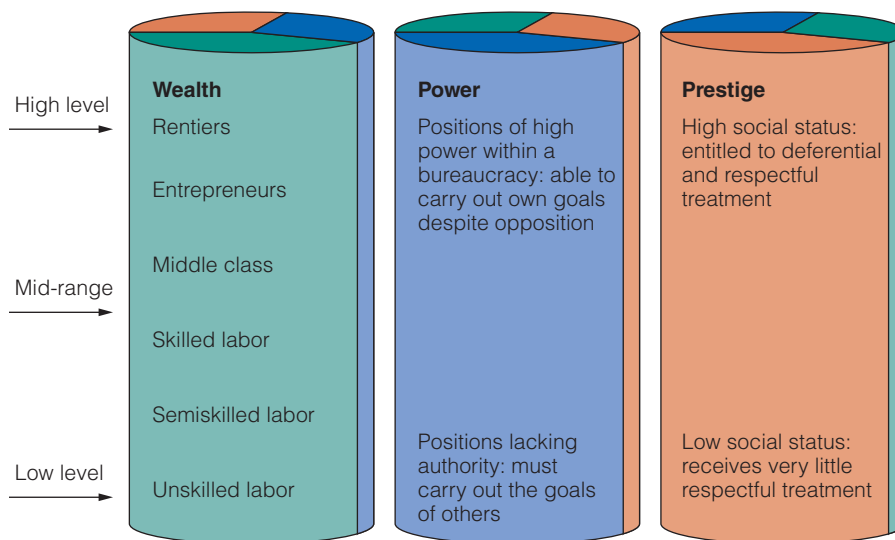
explanation of the class structure and by identifying additional classes. Both Marx and Weber emphasized that capitalists and workers are the primary players in a class society and both noted the importance of class to people's life chances. However, they saw different futures for capitalism and the social system. Marx saw these structures being overthrown; Weber saw the increasing bureaucratization of life even without capitalism.

Contemporary Sociological Models of the U.S. Class Structure

How many social classes exist in the United States? What criteria are used for determining class membership? No broad consensus exists about how to characterize the class structure in this country. In fact, many people deny that class distinctions exist. Most people like to think of themselves as middle class; it puts them in a comfortable middle position—neither rich nor poor. Sociologists have developed two models of the class structure: One is based on a Weberian approach, the other on a Marxian approach. We now examine both models briefly.

The Weberian Model of the U.S. Class Structure

Expanding on Weber's analysis of class structure, sociologist Dennis Gilbert (2018) uses a model of social classes based on three elements: education, occupation of family head, and family income (see ■ Figure 7.7).



The Upper (Capitalist) Class The upper class is the wealthiest and most powerful class in the United States. About 1 percent of the population is included in this class, whose members own substantial income-producing assets and operate on both the national and international levels. According to Gilbert (2018), people in this class have an influence on the economy and society far beyond their numbers. He estimates their annual income to be in the \$1.5–2 million range, mostly from assets.

Some models throughout the years have further divided the upper class into two categories: the upper-upper (“old money”) and lower-upper (“new money”) divisions (Coleman and Rainwater, 1978; Kendall, 2002; Warner and Lunt, 1941). From this approach, members of the upper-upper class come from prominent families that possess great

FIGURE 7.6 Weber's Multidimensional Approach to Social Stratification

According to Max Weber, wealth, power, and prestige are separate continuums. Individuals may rank high in one dimension and low in another or they may rank high or low in more than one dimension. Also, individuals may use their high rank in one dimension to achieve a comparable rank in another. How does Weber's model compare with Marx's approach, as shown in Figure 7.3?

Mark Peterson/Redux

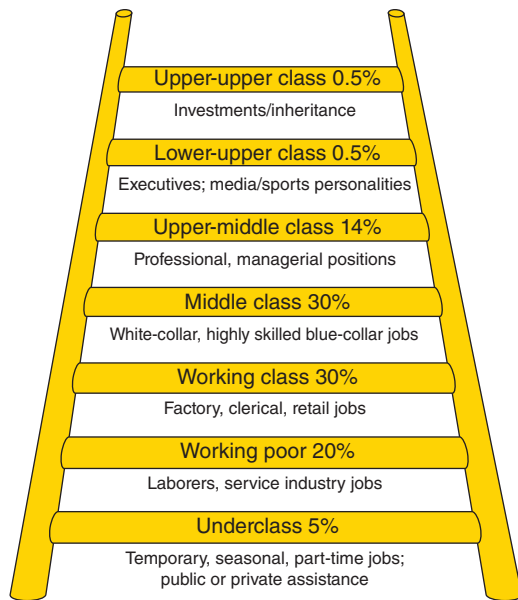


FIGURE 7.7 Stratification Based on Education, Occupation, and Income

wealth that they have held for several generations. In the past, family names—such as Rockefeller, Mellon, Du Pont, and Kennedy—were well known and often held in high esteem. Persons in the upper-upper class tend to have strong feelings of in-group solidarity. They belong to the same exclusive clubs and support high culture (such as the opera, symphony, and ballet and art museums). Children are educated in prestigious private schools and Ivy League universities; many acquire strong feelings of privilege from birth. Children of the upper class are socialized to view themselves as different from others; they also learn that they are expected to marry within their own class (Kendall, 2002; Mills, 1959a; Warner and Lunt, 1941).

Today, some upper-class family names are still well known, but other individuals are less well known by name and have been made their fortunes more recently in fields such as retail founders (the Walton family, founders of Walmart), high-tech entrepreneurs (Bill Gates of Microsoft, Mark Zuckerberg of Facebook, and Jeff Bezos of Amazon) and hedge-fund managers (James Simons of Renaissance Technologies, Ray Dalio of Bridgewater, Ken Griffin of Citadel, and John Overdeck and David Siegel of Two Sigma Investments). The “newer rich” have earned most of their money in their own lifetime and are often referred to as the “working rich,” as are some people who identify with the upper-middle class (Gilbert, 2018).

The Upper-Middle Class Persons in the upper-middle class typically earn incomes in the \$200,000–400,000 range, and may go as high as \$500,000 for the “working rich.” These individuals are often highly educated professionals who hold graduate degrees and have built careers such as physicians, attorneys, stockbrokers, or corporate managers. Others derive their income from family-owned

businesses. A combination of three factors qualifies people for the upper-middle class: university degrees, authority and independence on the job, and high income. Of all the class categories, the upper-middle class is the one that is most shaped by formal education.

The upper-middle class has also been referred to as the consumer class because they frequently spend money on spacious houses and luxury vehicles. Many people in this category believe that they have achieved the American Dream by taking all the right steps to become successful professionally and financially.

Over the past fifty years, more Asian Americans, Latinx, and African Americans have joined the upper-middle class through placing great importance on education as a means of attaining the American Dream. Many people of color moved into the upper-middle class by acquiring well-paid professional positions in various employment sectors.

The Middle Class In past decades a high school diploma was necessary to qualify for most middle-class jobs. Today, two-year or four-year college degrees have replaced the high school diploma as an entry-level requirement for employment in many middle-class occupations, including medical technicians, nurses, legal and medical assistants, lower-level managers, semiprofessionals, and nonretail sales workers. Most people in this country think of themselves as middle class but the typical income of a family in the middle class is around \$85,000, which far exceeds what many of these families actually earn in a year, particularly if they have only one family member in the full-time workforce.

Traditionally, most middle-class occupations have been relatively secure and have provided more opportunities for advancement than working-class positions. However, several factors have eroded the hope for upward mobility and achievement of the American Dream for this class: (1) the higher cost of housing in many areas of the country; (2) job loss and instability in some economic sectors, sometimes leading to blocked mobility on the job or longer periods of unemployment; and (3) national and global economic uncertainty brought about by sharp political divisions within and across nations, and environmental degradation that leads to the deterioration of the environment through depletion of resources, destruction of ecosystems, and extension of wildlife habitat destruction and pollution. All of these factors, plus the natural and human disasters associated with them, contribute to job loss and financial ruin for workers in areas heavily affected by these crises.

power

the ability of people or groups to achieve their goals despite opposition from others.

socioeconomic status (SES)

a combined measure that attempts to classify individuals, families, or households in terms of factors such as income, occupation, and education to determine class location.

The Working Class This class is characterized by an annual income in the \$40,000 range. In the past, the working class was made up of people in occupational categories such as semiskilled machine operators in factories. Today, many in the working class are employed in the service sector as clerks, salespeople, and fast-food workers whose job responsibilities involve routine, mechanized tasks requiring little skill beyond basic literacy and a brief period of on-the-job training. Some people in the working class are employed in what used to be referred to as *pink-collar occupations*—relatively low-paying, nonmanual, semiskilled positions primarily held by women, such as daycare workers, checkout clerks, and restaurant servers. This term came from the fact that many female employees in cafes, restaurants, and other food-service industries were required to wear uniforms that had pink collars. Even though this is typically not the case in the twenty-first century, the symbolism is still a reflection of second-tier, female-dominated jobs that often pay minimum wage and have few, if any, benefits such as sick leave, parental leave, or paid holidays and vacations (■Figure 7.8).

The Working Poor Members of the working-poor class have an annual income in the \$25,000 range, living from just above to just below the poverty line. They typically hold unskilled jobs, seasonal migrant jobs in agriculture, lower-paid factory jobs, and service jobs (such as nurses' aides and home health workers without advanced training). Employed single mothers who have not finished high school or who have earned a GED often belong to this class; consequently, children are overrepresented in this category. African Americans and other people of color are also overrepresented among the working poor. Living from paycheck to paycheck makes it impossible for the working poor to save sufficient money for emergencies like a vehicle breaking down or job loss, which are constant threats to any economic stability they may have.

Early in the twenty-first century, social critic and journalist Barbara Ehrenreich (2001, 2011) left her upper-middle-class lifestyle as an author and college professor to see if it was possible for the working poor to live on the wages that they were being paid as restaurant servers, salesclerks at discount department stores, aides at nursing homes, housecleaners for franchise maid services, or similar jobs. She conducted her research by actually holding those jobs for

periods of time and seeing if she could live on the wages that she received. Through her research, Ehrenreich persuasively demonstrated that people who work full time, year round, for poverty-level wages must develop survival strategies that include such things as help from relatives or constantly moving from one residence to another in order to have a place to live. Like many other researchers, Ehrenreich found that minimum-wage jobs cannot cover the full cost of living, such as rent, food, and the rest of an adult's monthly needs, even without taking into consideration the needs of children or other family members. If Ehrenreich's study were to be replicated now, we would probably find that the tasks she sought to accomplish are even more difficult today because jobs have become more scarce, more people are working part time even though they desire full-time employment, and the cost of living continues to increase in many regions.

At some point in our lives, most of us have held a job paying the minimum wage, and we know the limitations of trying to survive on such low earnings. The federal *minimum wage* is the hourly rate that (with certain exceptions) is the lowest amount an employer can legally pay its employees (each state may adopt a higher minimum wage but not a lower one). In 2019 the federal minimum wage was \$7.25 per hour, where it had been since July 2009. Some cities and states have increased this wage above \$7.25 per hour, but many people remain at the 2019 federal minimum wage. A person earning minimum wage and working forty hours every week, fifty-two weeks per year (in other words, no time off, no vacation), would earn an amount slightly above \$15,000 annually. This would be slightly above the poverty line for a household of one (12,490) but below the poverty line for a two-person family or household (\$16,910) in 2019. Numerous discussions have taken place about



Craig Wang/Bloomberg/Getty Images

FIGURE 7.8 In which segment of the class structure would sociologists place this worker? What are the key elements of that social class?

increasing the federal minimum wage, but political leaders remain extremely divided on such issues. Increasing social and economic inequality in the United States has been partly attributed to the vast divide between the low wages paid to workers and the astronomically high salaries and compensation packages given to major corporate CEOs and others at the top of the socioeconomic ladder.

The Underclass People in the *underclass* are poor, seldom employed, and caught in long-term deprivation that results from low levels of education and income and high rates of unemployment. Their income from all sources (including multiple assistance programs) is at or below \$15,000 per year. People without a “living wage” often must rely on public- or private-assistance programs for their survival. Some persons in this category are unable to work because of age or disability; others experience discrimination based on appearance, religion, race/ethnicity, or other attributes deemed “undesirable” by employers. Single mothers are overrepresented in this class because of the lack of available jobs, lack of affordable childcare, and other impediments to the mother’s future and that of her children.

Gaining work-related skills and having employment opportunities are two critical issues for people on the lowest rungs of the class ladder. Many of the jobs that exist today require specialized knowledge or skills that are inaccessible to people in the underclass. Skills and jobs are essential for people to have the opportunity to earn a decent wage; have medical coverage; live meaningful, productive lives; and raise their children in a safe environment. These issues are closely tied to upward mobility and the American Dream that we have been discussing in this chapter.

The Marxian Model of the U.S. Class Structure

The earliest Marxian model of class structure identified ownership or nonownership of the means of production as the distinguishing feature of classes. From this perspective, classes are social groups organized around property ownership, and social stratification is created and maintained by one group in order to protect and enhance its own economic interests. Moreover, societies are organized around classes in conflict over scarce resources. From this perspective, inequality results from the ways in which the more powerful exploit the less powerful.

Contemporary Marxian (or conflict) models examine class in terms of people’s relationship to others in the production process. For example, conflict theorists attempt to determine the degree of control that workers have over the decision-making process and the extent to which they are able to plan and implement their own work. They also analyze the type of supervisory authority, if any, that a worker has over other workers. According to this approach, most employees are a part of the working class because they do not control either their own labor or that of others.

Erik Olin Wright (1979, 1985, 1997, 2010, 2019) was one of the leading stratification theorists to examine social class from a Marxian perspective. Wright concluded that Marx’s definition of “workers” does not fit the occupations found in advanced capitalist societies. For example, many top executives, managers, and supervisors who do not own the means of production (and thus would be “workers” in Marx’s model) act like capitalists in their zeal to control workers and maximize profits. Likewise, some experts hold positions in which they have control over money and the use of their own time even though they are not owners. Wright views Marx’s category of “capitalist” as being too broad as well. For instance, small-business owners might be viewed as capitalists because they own their own tools and have a few people working for them, but they have little in common with large-scale capitalists and do not share the interests of factory workers. ■ Figure 7.9 compares Marx’s and Wright’s models.

Wright (1979) also argues that classes in modern capitalism cannot be defined simply in terms of different levels of wealth, power, and prestige, as in the Weberian model. Consequently, he outlines four criteria for placement in the class structure: (1) ownership of the means of production, (2) purchase of the labor of others (employing others), (3) control of the labor of others (supervising others on the job), and (4) sale of one’s own labor (being employed by someone else). Wright (1978) assumes that these criteria can be used to determine the class placement of all workers, regardless of race/ethnicity, in a capitalist society. Let’s take a brief look at Wright’s (1979, 1985) four classes—the capitalist class, the managerial class, the small-business class, and the working class—so that you can compare them to those found in the Weberian model.

The Capitalist Class According to Wright, this class holds most of the wealth and power in society through ownership of capital—for example, banks, corporations, factories, mines, news and entertainment industries, and agribusiness firms. The “ruling elites,” or “ruling class,” within the capitalist class hold political power and are often elected or appointed to influential political and regulatory positions.

This class is composed of individuals who have inherited fortunes, own major corporations, or are top corporate executives with extensive stock holdings or control of company investments. Even though many top executives have only limited *legal ownership* of their corporations,

pink-collar occupations

relatively low-paying, nonmanual, semiskilled positions primarily held by women.

underclass

those who are poor, seldom employed, and caught in long-term deprivation that results from low levels of education and income and high rates of unemployment.

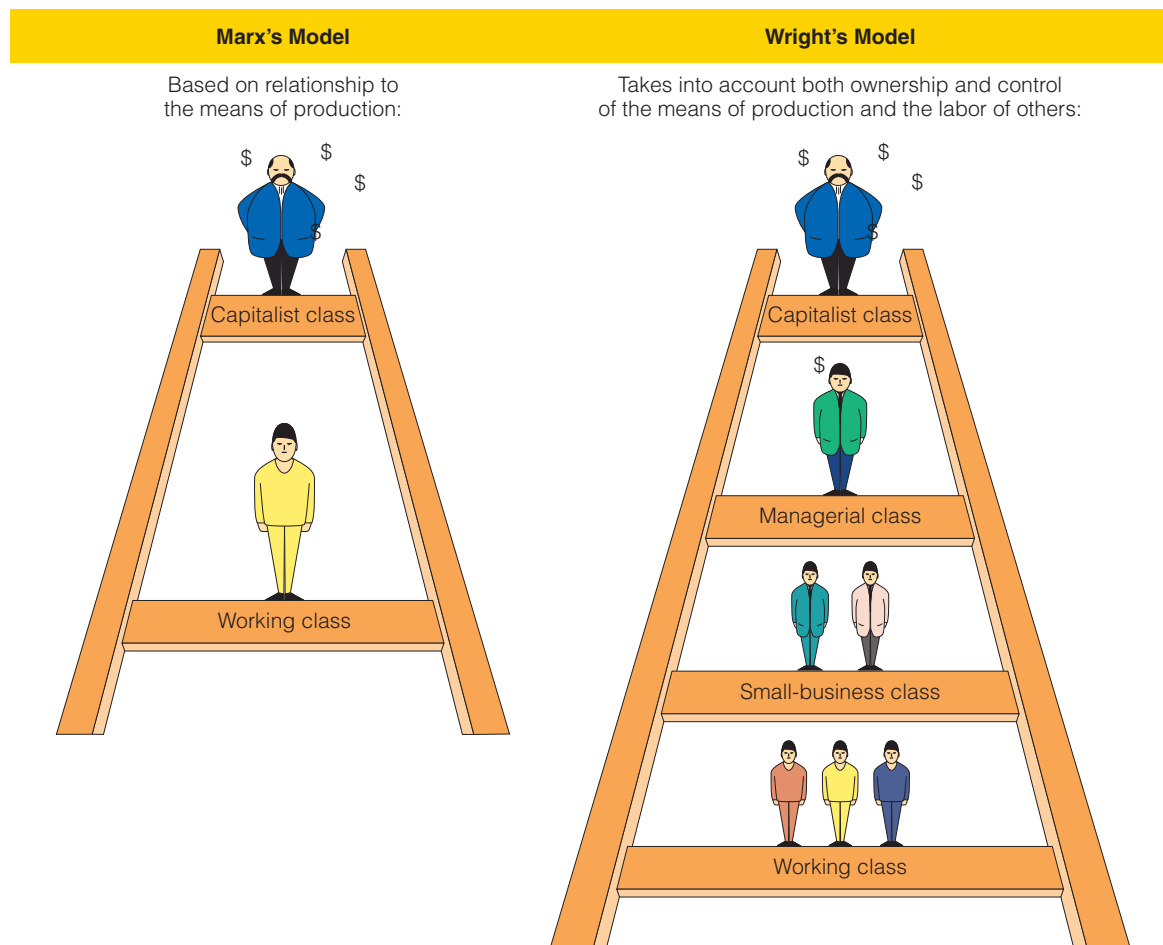


FIGURE 7.9 Comparison of Marx's and Wright's Models of Class Structure

they have substantial economic ownership and exert extensive control over investments, distribution of profits, and management of resources. The major sources of income for the capitalist class are profits, interest, and very high salaries. Members of this class make important decisions about the workplace, including which products and services to make available to consumers and how many workers to hire or fire.

Forbes magazine's 2018 list of the richest people in the world identified Jeff Bezos (founder of Amazon) as the wealthiest capitalist, with a net worth ranging from \$107 and \$131 billion. Bill Gates (founder of Microsoft) came in second at approximately \$96 billion, and Warren Buffett (founder of Berkshire Hathaway) was third with \$82.5 billion. The next three richest on the *Forbes* list live in France, Mexico, and Spain (*Forbes*, 2019b). Although many men who made the *Forbes* wealthiest list gained their fortunes through entrepreneurship or being CEOs of large corporations, most women who made the list acquired their wealth through inheritance, marriage, or both (■Figure 7.10). The wealthiest woman in the world in 2018 was Francoise

Bettencourt Meyers, French heir to the L'Oréal cosmetics fortune (\$49 billion). Also included on the list was Alice Walton (\$44.4 billion) of the U.S. Walmart family (*Forbes*, 2019b). Some people on the *Forbes* top billionaires list have inherited their fortunes, but others have accumulated staggering wealth while they were in their twenties or thirties, doing such things as being the founder of a social media site.

The Managerial Class People in the managerial class have substantial control over the means of production and over workers. However, these upper-level managers, supervisors, and professionals usually do not participate in key corporate decisions such as how to invest profits. Lower-level managers may have some control over employment practices, including the hiring and firing of some workers.

Top professionals such as physicians, attorneys, accountants, and engineers may control the structure of their own work; however, they typically do not own the means of production and may not have supervisory



FIGURE 7.10 Men who make the *Forbes* wealthiest list usually gain their fortunes through entrepreneurship while women are more likely to acquire their wealth through inheritance, marriage, or both. Carlos Slim, chairman of Grupo Carso, is listed as one of the world's wealthiest men. By contrast, Alice Walton's billions in net worth came primarily from an inheritance from her father, Sam Walton, the founder of Walmart.

authority over more than a few people. Even so, they may influence the organization of work and the treatment of other workers. Members of the capitalist class often depend on these professionals for their specialized knowledge.

The Small-Business Class This class consists of people who are self-employed—small-business owners and craftspeople—who may hire employees but also do some

of their own work (■ Figure 7.11). Some own businesses such as “mom-and-pop” grocery stores, retail clothing stores, and jewelry stores. Others have businesses in landscaping and groundskeeping, office and household cleaning, home health and personal care, and construction. Still others are professionals such as lawyers, management analysts, and accountants and auditors who receive relatively high incomes from selling their knowledge and services. Some of these professionals share attributes with members of the capitalist class because they have formed corporations that hire and control employees who produce profits for the professionals.

How many people are self-employed today? About 16 million persons in the United States were self-employed in 2018. This represents about 10 percent of the nation's 157 million workers. However, the impact of self-employment is wider than this. Members of the self-employed, small-business class often provide jobs, an estimated 44 million, for other workers. This means the self-employment sector accounts for nearly 30 percent of the U.S. workforce (Pew Research Center, 2019).

The Working Class The working class is made up of a number of subgroups, one of which is blue-collar workers, some of whom are highly skilled and well paid and others of whom are unskilled and poorly paid. Skilled blue-collar workers include electricians, plumbers, and carpenters; unskilled blue-collar workers include janitors and gardeners.

Some white-collar workers are actually in the working class because they do not own the means of production, do not control the work of others, and are relatively powerless in the workplace. Some secretaries, administrative assistants and other clerical workers, and salesworkers are members of the white-collar faction of the working class. They take orders from others and tend to work under constant supervision. Thus, these workers are at the bottom of the class structure

in terms of domination and control in the workplace.

Although Marxian and Weberian models of the U.S. class structure show differences in people's occupations and access to valued resources, neither fully reflects the nature and extent of inequality in the United States. In the next section we take a closer look at the unequal distribution of income and wealth and the effects of inequality on people's opportunities and life chances.



Bo Zaunders/Encyclopedia/Corbis

FIGURE 7.11 Many immigrants believe that they can achieve the American Dream by starting a small business, such as a store or restaurant. Other immigrants are employed in major retail concessions, such as the man shown here who works at an airport newsstand.

Inequality in the United States

Throughout human history, people have argued about the distribution of scarce resources in society. Disagreements often center on whether the share we get is a fair reward for our effort and hard work. Recently, social analysts have pointed out that the old maxim “the rich get richer” continues to be not only valid but growing more intense in the United States. To understand how this happens, we must take a closer look at the distribution of income and wealth in this country.

Distribution of Income and Wealth

Money is essential for acquiring goods and services. People without money cannot purchase food, shelter, clothing, medical care, legal aid, education, and the other things they need or desire. Money—in the form of both income and wealth—is very unevenly distributed in the United States.

Income Inequality *Income* is the economic gain derived from wages, salaries, income transfers (governmental aid), and ownership of property. Or, to put it another way, income comes from the money, wages, and payments that people receive from their occupation or investments. Data from the

U.S. Census Bureau typically provide income estimates that are based solely on money income before taxes and do not include the value of noncash benefits such as health care coverage or retirement benefits.

Sociologist Dennis Gilbert (2018) compares the distribution of income to a national pie that has been sliced into portions, ranging in size from stingy to generous, for distribution among segments of the population. As shown in ■Figure 7.12, in 2018 the wealthiest 20 percent of U.S. households received more than half (52 percent) of the total aggregate income “pie,” while the poorest 20 percent of households received slightly more than 3 percent of all income. The gap between the rich and the poor has widened significantly in recent decades (see ■Figure 7.13).

Income distribution varies by race/ethnicity as well as class. ■Figure 7.14 compares median household income by race/ethnicity, showing not only the disparity among groups but also the consistency of that disparity over almost two decades. Although households across all racial–ethnic categories have experienced some decline in real annual median income, the income gap between African American (black) households and white (non-Hispanic) and Asian or Pacific Islander households is striking. In 2018 African American households had the lowest median income, \$41,692, as

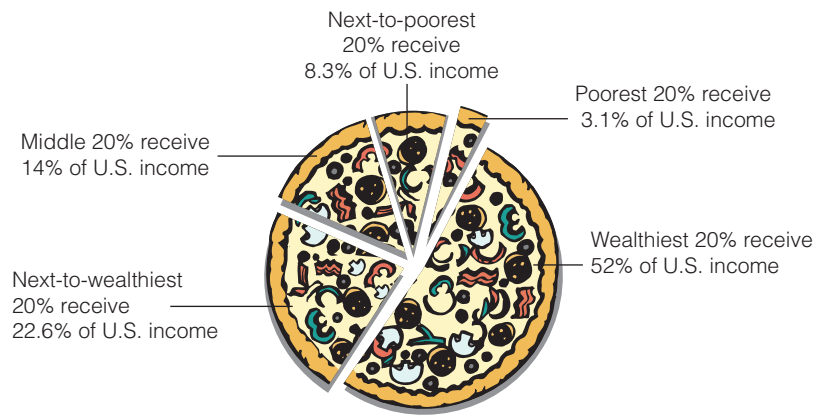


FIGURE 7.12 Distribution of Aggregate Income in the United States, 2018

Thinking of aggregate income in the United States (before inflation and taxes are taken into account) as a large pizza helps us to see which segments of the population receive the largest and smallest portions. For example, aggregate income (before taking inflation and taxes into account) for a family might be the combined income of two spouses who file a joint tax return.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau Historical Income Table H-2, 2018.

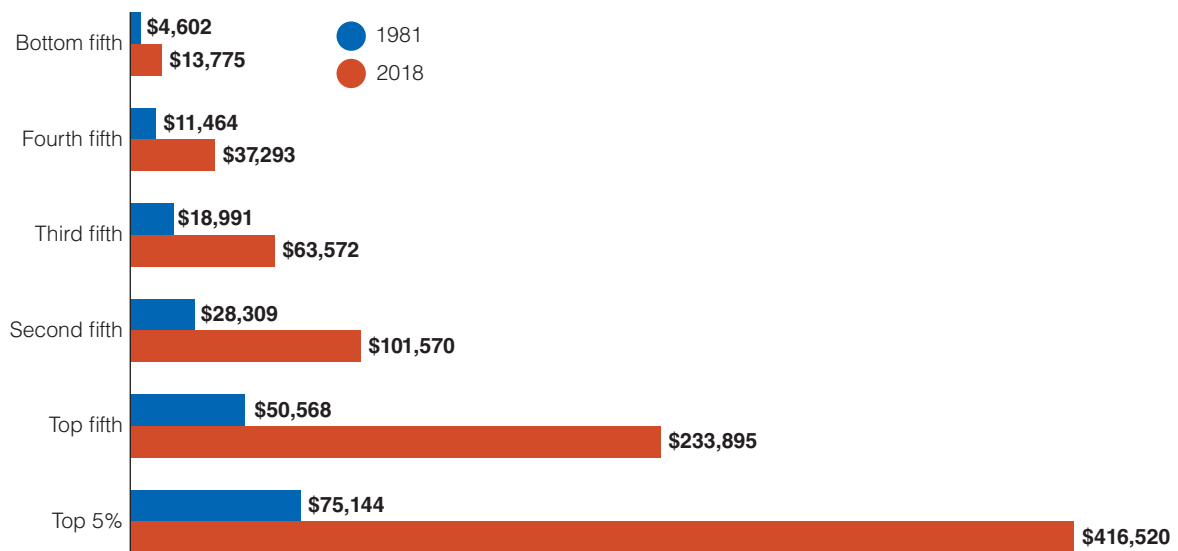


FIGURE 7.13 Mean Household Income in the United States, 2018

This chart shows the distribution of before-tax income in the United States. Notice the dramatic increase in income for the top 5 percent of households. During the past four decades the difference in income between the richest and poorest has become much more pronounced.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau Historical Income Table H-3, 2018.

compared with Asian households, which had the highest median income, \$87,194. White (non-Hispanic) households had a median income of \$70,642, as compared with Hispanic households (of any race), which had \$51,450.

Wealth Inequality Income is only one aspect of wealth. Wealth is the value of the assets that an individual or family holds at a specific point in time. Wealth includes property such as buildings, land, farms, houses, factories, and cars, as well as other assets such as bank accounts, corporate stocks, bonds, and insurance policies. Wealth is computed by subtracting all debt obligations and converting the remaining assets into cash. Wealth is also referred to as “net worth,” and it is a very important component in determining the standard of living for families and households. *Net worth* is the total household wealth after secured debts (such as home mortgages and vehicle loans) and unsecured debts (such as credit-card debt and some bank loans) have

been subtracted. For most people in the United States, wealth is invested primarily in property that generates no income, such as a home or car. By contrast, the wealth of elites is often in the form of income-producing property or investments that make money for them. Wealth is especially important because it can be transferred across generations and thus increases inequality over time in a nation.

Wealth is more unevenly distributed than income. In 2018 the top 1 percent of U.S. households owned 32.4 percent of U.S. wealth. The next 9 percent (90–99 percent) owned nearly 37 percent of all wealth. Households in the 50–90 percent category owned 28.6 percent of all wealth.

income

the economic gain derived from wages, salaries, income transfers (governmental aid), and ownership of property.

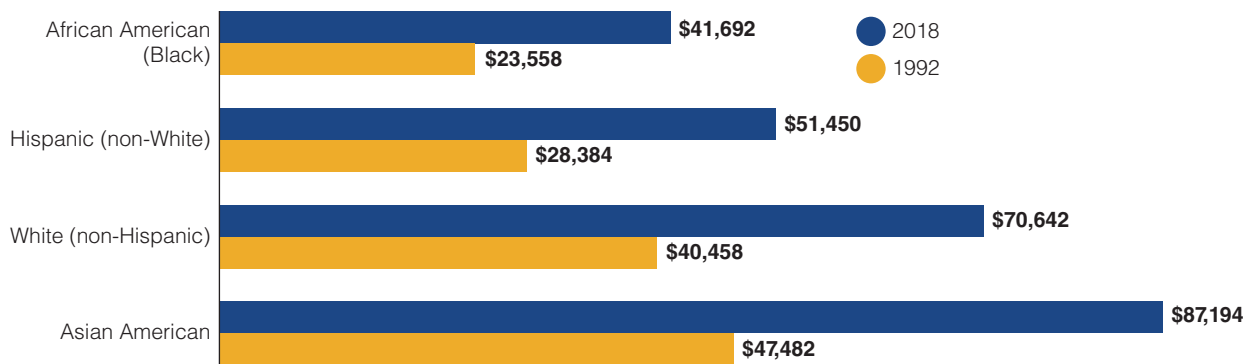


FIGURE 7.14 Median Household Income by Race/Ethnicity in the United States, 2018

Source: Semega, Kollar, Creamer, and Mohanty, 2019.

By contrast, the bottom 50 percent of households held only 0.019 percent of all wealth in 2018. Wealth estimates are very complicated and various governmental agencies and organizations calculate these percentages differently. The data above are based on the assumption that the top 1 percent holds \$34.72 trillion in wealth, as compared to \$39.60 trillion in the 90–99 percent category. Next, the 50–90 percent category holds approximately \$30.72 trillion in wealth, and the bottom 50 percent hold only \$2.08 trillion in wealth, based on an assumption that total wealth amounted to about \$107.13 trillion in 2018 (Federal Reserve Board, 2019).

Since the 1970s, the wealth of the richest 1 percent in the United States has increased dramatically. Many people in less affluent wealth categories live on wages from their jobs; however, the truly wealthy live on, and become richer from, investments in stocks, bonds, real estate, and other financial endeavors, not from wages.

The racial wealth gap continues to widen in terms of both wealth creation and maintenance. Factors closely associated with the growing racial wealth divide are as follows: (1) the number of years of homeownership; (2) household income; (3) unemployment, which is more prevalent among African American families; (4) possession of a college education; and (5) inheritance, financial support from family or friends, and preexisting family wealth (Shapiro, Meschede, and Osoro, 2013). Residential segregation artificially lowers the cost of housing and the building of home equity for persons of color who own residences in nonwhite neighborhoods. Moreover, for many years white Americans have been more likely to inherit money from their families than are persons of color. Typically, white Americans have also received more parental assistance in paying for a college education and making down payments on home purchases because their families have had greater financial reserves. White Americans have also had easier access to credit or have been able to acquire credit with lower interest rates and lending costs.

Given these factors, the racial divide in median wealth in U.S. households is striking. ■ Figure 7.15 shows the racial divide in median family wealth in 2017 (the latest year for which complete information is available). The median wealth of white families has remained at about ten times

that of the median wealth of African American families. Between 1992 and 2017, the median wealth for white families grew by more than \$50,000 whereas median black wealth did not grow in real terms during that same period of time. White (non-Hispanic) Americans, at \$162,550, have much higher median wealth than Hispanic Americans (Latinx), at \$21,482, and African Americans (blacks), at \$16,555 (federalreserve.gov, 2018). We are unable to calculate where Asian Americans specifically fit in the wealth mix because some Asian Americans and other racial-ethnic groups are not identified separately by the Federal Reserve Board (2017), as stated below:

Other families—a diverse group that includes those identifying as Asian, American Indian, Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander, other race, and all respondents reporting more than one racial identification—have lower net worth than white families but higher net worth than black and Hispanic families. The same patterns of inequality in the distribution of wealth across all families are also evident within race/ethnicity groups.

As some analysts have suggested, closing the racial wealth gap is a crucial concern for the United States not only because of the ability to lift more people out of poverty and come closer to achieving the American Dream but also because of the positive effect greater racial wealth equality would have on the U.S. economy. For such change to occur, both federal and state governments would have to play a more active part in reducing or eliminating remaining discriminatory policies and practices in public and private spheres (Umoh, 2019).

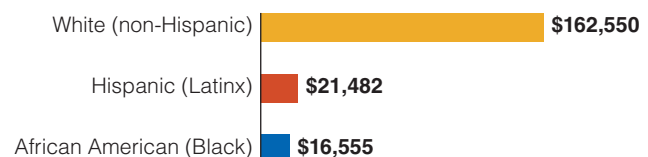


FIGURE 7.15 Racial Divide in Net Worth, 2017

Source: Federal Reserve Board, 2018.

Consequences of Inequality

Income and wealth are not simply statistics; they are intricately related to the American Dream and our individual life chances. Persons with a high income or substantial wealth have more control over their own lives. They have greater access to goods and services; they can afford better housing, more education, and a wider range of medical services. Persons with less income, especially those living in poverty, must spend their limited resources to acquire the basic necessities of life.

Physical Health, Mental Health, and Nutrition People who are wealthy, are well educated, and have high-paying jobs are much more likely to be healthy than are poor people. As people's economic status increases, so does their health status. The poor have shorter life expectancies and are at greater risk for chronic illnesses such as type 2 diabetes, heart disease, and cancer, as well as infectious diseases such as tuberculosis. Compared with adults living in households with incomes at least four times the poverty level, adults living below the poverty line are five times more likely to report their health as being fair or poor and more than eight times more likely to report serious psychological distress.

Children born into poor families are at much greater risk of dying during their first year of life. Some die from disease, accidents, or violence. Others are unable to survive because they are born with low birth weight, a condition linked to birth defects and increased probability of infant mortality. Low birth weight in infants is attributed, at least in part, to the inadequate nutrition received by many low-income pregnant women. Most of the poor do not receive preventive medical and dental checkups; many do not receive adequate medical care after they experience illness or injury.

Many high-poverty areas lack an adequate supply of doctors and medical facilities. Even in areas where such services are available, the inability to pay often prevents people from seeking medical care when it is needed. Some "charity" clinics and hospitals may provide indigent patients (those who cannot pay) with minimal emergency care but make them feel stigmatized in the process. For some poor individuals living in states that did not expand Medicaid coverage under the Affordable Care Act, the lack of adequate health insurance remains a pressing problem. The Census Bureau classifies health insurance coverage as private coverage or public coverage. Private health insurance is a plan provided through an employer or a union or purchased by an individual from a private company. TRICARE, formerly known as Civilian Health and Medical Program of the Uniformed Service, is also included under private coverage. By contrast, public coverage includes such programs as Medicare; Medicaid; CHAMPVA or VA, which is military health care; the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP); and individual state health plans.

In 2018, approximately 27.5 million people in the United States—8.5 percent of the U.S. population—had no health insurance coverage for the entire year (Berchick, Barnett, and Upton, 2019). ■ Figure 7.16 shows that the rate of uninsured people increases as household income decreases.

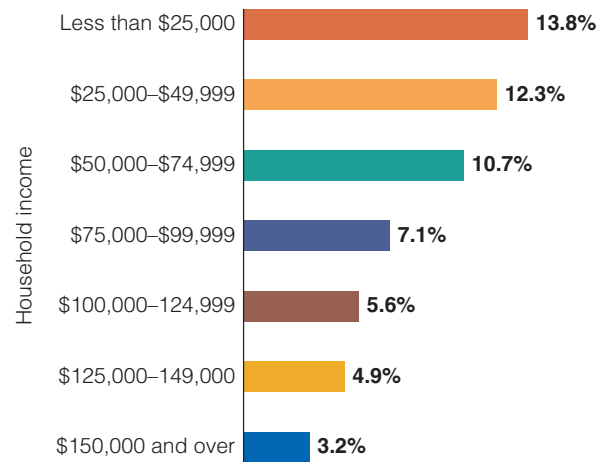


FIGURE 7.16 Rate of Uninsurance by Household Income, 2018

Source: Berchick et al., 2019.

About 13.8 percent of all households with income less than \$25,000 were uninsured in 2018, as compared with only 3.2 percent of households uninsured when income was \$150,000 and over (Berchick, Barnett, and Upton, 2019).

Many people rely on their employers for health insurance, but some employers are cutting back on health coverage, particularly for employees' family members. Other employers have increased employees' portion of premiums for coverage, particularly when spouses and/or children are included. In 2018, the majority of people (67.3 percent) with health insurance were covered by private plans, primarily employment-based health insurance (55.1 percent). The percentage of people covered by public health programs was 34.4 percent, with 17.8 percent enrolled in Medicare, 17.9 percent enrolled in Medicaid, and 1.0 percent in VA and CHAMPVA. As discussed in Chapter 14, Medicaid is a means-tested program, which is defined as a government program that uses various measures to determine whether an individual or family is eligible for government assistance, based on whether the individual or family possesses the means to do without that help. This program should not be confused with Medicare, which is a national social insurance program that provides health insurance for U.S. residents age sixty-five and older who have worked and paid into the system, as well as younger persons with disabilities, end-stage renal disease, and amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (also known as Lou Gehrig's disease). Since 2010, the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act has reduced the overall number and percentage of uninsured persons, but the future of this law will be determined by future presidential and Congressional elections and the decisions made by those persons who are elected to public office.

What is the relationship between class (socioeconomic status) and health? Although the precise relationship between class and health is not known, research suggests that people with higher income and wealth often tend to have different behavioral patterns that might be

linked to their health status. Statistically speaking, for example, they smoke less, exercise more, maintain a healthy body weight, and eat nutritious meals. By contrast, many people in lower-paying jobs are frequently in more dangerous work environments and have the greatest health hazards. Black lung disease, cancers caused by asbestos, and other environmental hazards found in the workplace are more likely to affect manual laborers, construction workers, and other lower-income workers, as are occupation-related accidents. Examples include window-washers on scaffolding on skyscrapers, highway construction workers, and persons employed in toxic factory settings.

Good health is basic to good life chances; in turn, adequate nutrition is essential for good health. Hunger is related to class position and income inequality. Studying the problem of hunger has become more complex in recent years because the Department of Agriculture ceased using the word *hunger* in its reports. *Food insecure* is now used to identify people whose access to adequate food is limited by lack of money and other resources. People living with food insecurity include those individuals who are unable to afford the basic necessities of life, have no transportation to get to a grocery store or other food source, and those who live in *food deserts* where it is impossible to purchase fresh, nutritious foods because the only available fast-food stores typically sell “junk food.” Indicators of “low food security” are factors such as “worrying food would run out,” “food bought did not last,” and “could not afford balanced meals.” “Very low food security” is characterized by the above factors plus “being hungry but not eating,” “losing weight,” “did not eat whole day,” and “did not eat whole day for three months or longer.” Rates of food insecurity are highest in households with incomes near or below the poverty line, households that are headed by single persons with one or more children present, African American (black) and Hispanic households, and families containing one or more undocumented immigrants who fear detection by law enforcement officials.

Sixty-one percent of individuals in food-insecure households report that they, or other family members, had benefited from one or more of the three largest federal food and nutrition assistance programs: SNAP, WIC, and the National School Lunch Program. SNAP refers to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, which provides nutrition benefits to supplement the food budget of needy families so they can purchase healthy food and move toward self-sufficiency. SNAP is under the auspices of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Food and Nutrition Service. WIC refers to the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children. This program is federally funded but administered by the states to provide nutrition education for pregnant or breastfeeding women and families with children younger than age five. The vouchers they receive can be used to acquire supplemental food packages at authorized food stores. Foods purchased through the WIC program include

cereals; whole-grain items; fruits and vegetable; dairy/soy products; protein foods such as eggs, beans, and peanut butter; and baby food. Still other food assistance comes from the National School Lunch Program, which is a federally assisted meal plan that annually provides nearly 30 million children with food in public and private schools and residential childcare facilities. However, not all children are included in this program and, in some cases, if a parent has not paid their child’s cafeteria fees, the children are subjected to “lunch shaming.” The term *lunch shaming* refers to a situation in which cafeteria personnel or other school officials find out the student cannot pay for his or her lunch or is behind on a cafeteria bill and so throw away the child’s food or substitute a cheese or peanut butter and jelly sandwich for the regular hot meal. A public outcry about this practice hopefully means that by the time you read this, such shameful practice will have ceased to exist in U.S. public schools.

Lack of adequate nutrition is intricately linked to housing problems among lower-income families in the United States. There are many forms of housing problems, with homelessness being the most devastating of them all.

Housing As discussed in a previous chapter, homelessness is a major problem in this country. Estimates suggest that more than 550,000 people are homeless on a single night. (Counts of persons who are homeless are made on a single night each year to prevent recounting the same people on multiple occasions.) Although 65 percent of these individuals spend the night in homeless shelters, the other 35 percent sleep on sidewalks or in parks, cars, or abandoned buildings (Council of Economic Advisers, 2019). Child homelessness is a particularly growing problem intricately related to inequality. Many children who are homeless reside temporarily with other families or in homeless shelters, motels, cars, or tent cities along with other persons who are without a domicile.

Lack of *affordable* housing is one central problem brought about by economic inequality. Housing is considered affordable when a household spends no more than 30 percent of its income on rent or mortgage payments. But millions of renters and homeowner households pay more than half of their annual income for housing. It is estimated that six million children live in low-income families that cannot afford the high rents in their area (Tilly, 2019). Federal housing assistance programs are seriously underfunded, meaning that 77 percent of families with children who might be eligible for long-term assistance do not receive any (Tilly, 2019). Another concern is *substandard* housing, which refers to facilities that have inadequate heating, air conditioning, plumbing, electricity, or structural durability. Structural problems—caused by faulty construction or lack of adequate maintenance—exacerbate the potential for other problems such as damage from fire, falling objects, or floors and stairways collapsing.

Education Educational opportunities and life chances are directly linked. Some functionalist theorists view education as the “elevator” to social mobility. Improvements in the educational achievement levels (measured in number of years of schooling completed) of the poor, people of color, and white women have been cited as evidence that students’ abilities are now more important than their class, race, or gender. From this perspective, students have an opportunity to achieve upward mobility through school achievement. Functionalists generally see the education system as flexible, allowing more students the opportunity to attend college if they apply themselves (Ballantine, Hammack, and Stuber, 2017).

In contrast, most conflict theorists stress that schools are agencies for reproducing the capitalist class system and perpetuating inequality in society. From this perspective, education perpetuates poverty. Parents with low educational attainment and limited income are often not able to provide the same educational opportunities for their children as families where at least one parent has more formal education.

Today, great disparities exist in the distribution of educational resources. Because funding for education comes primarily from local property taxes, school districts in wealthy suburban areas generally pay higher teachers’ salaries, have newer buildings, and provide state-of-the-art equipment (■ Figure 7.17). By contrast, schools in poorer areas have a limited funding base. Students in central-city schools and poverty-stricken rural areas often attend dilapidated schools that lack essential equipment and teaching materials. As far back as the early 1990s, author Jonathan Kozol (1991, qtd. in Feagin and Feagin, 1994: 191) documented the effect on students of a two-tiered system, which remains in many of today’s schools:

Kindergartners are so full of hope, cheerfulness, high expectations. By the time they get into fourth grade, many begin to lose heart. They see the score, understanding they’re not getting what others are getting. . . . They see suburban schools on television. . . . They begin to get the point that they are not valued much in our society. By the time they are in [middle school or] junior high, they understand it. “We have eyes and we can see; we have hearts and we can feel. . . . We know the difference.”

Do you think this description is still applicable in some U.S. school districts today? Does poverty extract such a toll on many young people that they do not have the opportunity to finish high school, much less attend college? What do you think?



FatCamera/E+/Getty Images

FIGURE 7.17 Conflict theorists see schools as agents of the capitalist class system that perpetuates social inequality. Students from middle- and higher-income families often are educated in well-appointed environments, such as the one shown here, where the students have access to the latest in computer technology. By contrast, children from lower-income and poverty-level families tend to go to outdated schools with limited high-tech equipment and facilities.

Poverty in the United States

So far, we have examined various forms of inequality in the United States and their effects. Let’s now focus more closely on the problem of poverty in this country.

The United States has one of the highest rates of poverty among wealthy countries. When many people think about poverty, they think of people who are unemployed or on welfare. However, many hardworking people with full-time jobs live in poverty. The U.S. Social Security Administration has established an **official poverty line**, which is based on what the federal government considers to be the minimum amount of money required for living at a subsistence level. The poverty level (or poverty line) is computed by determining the cost of a minimally nutritious diet (a low-cost food budget on which a family could survive nutritionally on a short-term, emergency basis) and multiplying this figure by three to allow for nonfood costs. In 2018, the official poverty rate was 11.8 percent, which means that 38.1 million people in this country were living in poverty. When we look specifically at children, the 2018 poverty rate for children under age eighteen was 16.2 percent, as compared to 10.7 percent for people between the ages of eighteen and sixty-four. The poverty rate for those sixty-five years of age and older was 9.7 percent (Semega et al., 2019).

official poverty line

the income standard that is based on what the federal government considers to be the minimum amount of money required for living at a subsistence level.

When sociologists define poverty, they distinguish between absolute and relative poverty. **Absolute poverty** exists when people do not have the means to secure the most basic necessities of life. This definition comes closest to that used by the federal government. Absolute poverty often has life-threatening consequences, such as when a homeless person freezes to death on a park bench. By comparison, **relative poverty** exists when people may be able to afford basic necessities but are still unable to maintain an average standard of living. A family must have income substantially above the official poverty line in order to afford the basic necessities, even when these are purchased at the lowest possible cost. But many families do not earn enough money to afford living comfortably and must survive on an economy budget, as described by John Schwarz and Thomas Volgy (1992:43) below:

Members of families existing on the economy budget never go out to eat, for it is not included in the food budget; they never go out to a movie, concert, or ball game or indeed to any public or private establishment that charges admission, for there is no entertainment budget; they have no cable television, for the same reason; they never purchase alcohol or cigarettes; never take a vacation or holiday that involves any motel or hotel or, again, any meals out; never hire a baby-sitter or have any other paid child care; never give an allowance or other spending money to the children; never purchase any lessons or home-learning tools for the children; never buy books or records for the adults or children, or any toys, except in the small amounts available for birthday or Christmas presents (\$50 per person over the year); never pay for a haircut; never buy a magazine; have no money for the feeding or veterinary care of any pets; and, never spend any money for preschool for the children, or educational trips for them away from home, or any summer camp or other activity with a fee.

When do you think this was written? In the twenty-first century? No, this statement was written in 1992 by social scientists John Schwarz and Thomas Volgy to describe the limited resources of people at or on the edge of poverty. However, many people today live in similar or worse conditions. Other families hope that they will not sink even further, to the bottom rungs of poverty.

Who Are the Poor?

Poverty in the United States is not randomly distributed but rather is highly concentrated according to age, gender, and race/ethnicity.

Age In the past, persons over age sixty-five were at the greatest risk of being poor; however, older individuals today have the lowest poverty rate of all age categories, largely because of Medicare and Social Security. Actually titled “Old Age, Survivors, Disability, and Health Insurance,” Social

Security is a federal insurance program established in 1935 that protects against loss of income caused by retirement, disability, or death. When Social Security was first established, it was intended to supplement other savings and assets. But for 21 percent of married couples and about 45 percent of unmarried persons in 2019, Social Security provided 90 percent or more of their income (Social Security Administration, 2019). Overall, Social Security has been one of the most successful antipoverty programs in the United States. However, because Social Security benefits are based on the number of years of paid employment and preretirement earnings, lower-wage workers, particularly women and minorities, typically earned less during their years of employment and also received less in Social Security benefits, and thus were less protected against poverty, in their retirement years.

The child poverty rate in the United States is higher than in other industrialized countries. Children under age eighteen have the highest rate of poverty, followed by people ages eighteen to sixty-four (see ■ Figure 7.18). In 2018 the percentage of U.S. children living in poverty was 16.2 percent. However, 39 percent of children in female-householder families were in poverty in 2018 as compared to 7.6 percent of children among married-couple families and 18.7 percent among male-householder families (Semega et al., 2019). The precarious position of children of color is even more striking. As described by the Children’s Defense Fund (2019: 9):

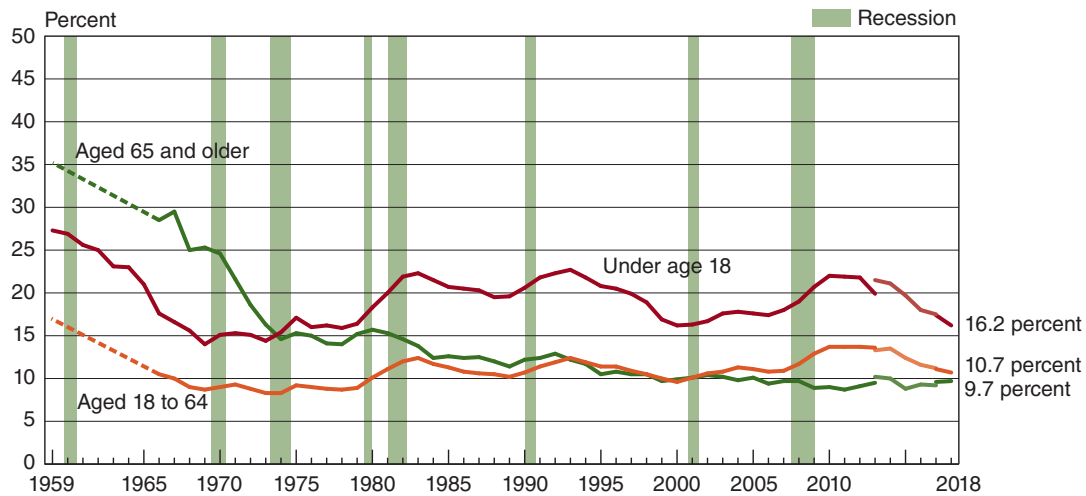
Poverty affects all children, but disproportionately children of color; more than 2 in 3 poor children are children of color.

Nearly 1 in 3 American Indian/Alaska Native children and more than 1 in 4 Black and Hispanic children are poor compared to 1 in 9 White children.

While American Indian/Alaska Native and Black children have the highest poverty rates, Hispanic children comprise the largest number of poor children followed by White children.

Gender In 2018 the poverty rate was 10.6 percent for males of all ages, as compared with 12.9 percent for females of all ages. However, these figures do not tell the entire story. Gender differences in poverty rates are more pronounced for people ages sixty-five and older and among younger women who head single-parent families. As shown in ■ Figure 7.19, the poverty rate for women ages sixty-five and older was 11.1 percent, while it was 8.1 percent for men. For those between the ages of eighteen and sixty-four, women had a poverty rate of 12.3, as compared to men at 9.0. Only in the youngest category (persons under age eighteen) are the percentages identical at 16.2 percent for both females and males (Semega et al., 2019).

In her now-classic study, sociologist Diana Pearce (1978) coined a term to describe this problem of gender-specific poverty: The **feminization of poverty** refers to the trend in which women are disproportionately represented among individuals living in poverty. Over the decades



Note: The data for 2017 and beyond reflect the implementation of an updated processing system. Data for people aged 65 and older were not available from 1960 to 1965.

FIGURE 7.18 U.S. Poverty Rates by Age, 1959–2018

Source: Semega et al., 2019.

since Pearce’s study, women have continued to face a higher risk of being poor because they bear the major economic and emotional burdens of raising children when they are single heads of households. This problem is compounded by the female-to-male earnings ratio, which is discussed in Chapter 10.

Does the feminization of poverty explain poverty in the United States today? Clearly, this thesis highlights a genuine problem—the link between gender and poverty (■ Figure 7.20). However, all women are not equally vulnerable to poverty: Many in the upper and upper-middle classes have the financial resources, education, and skills to support themselves regardless of the presence of a man in the household. Moreover, poverty is everyone’s problem, not just women’s. When women are impoverished, so are their children. Likewise, many of the poor in our society are men, especially those who are chronically unemployed, older men, the homeless, men with disabilities, and men of color.

Race/Ethnicity In 2018 whites (non-Hispanic) accounted for 60.2 percent of the U.S. population and 41.2 percent of people in poverty. However, when compared to other racial and ethnic categories, whites (non-Hispanic) had the lowest overall rate of poverty—8.1 percent. Higher rates of poverty were experienced by African Americans (blacks) at 20.8 percent, Hispanics at 17.6 percent, and Asians at 10.1 percent (Semega et al., 2019). These overall poverty rates have gone down slightly but overall remain persistently stubborn to change.

Economic and Structural Sources of Poverty

Social inequality and poverty have both economic and structural sources. Unemployment is a major cause of contemporary poverty that involves both economic and structural components. Tough economic times provide fewer opportunities for individuals to get a position that may help them gain a toehold in U.S. society. In December 2019, 5.8 million

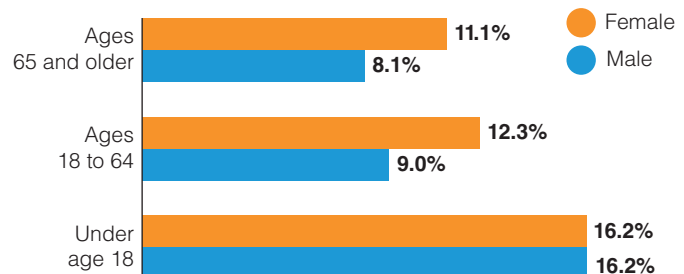


FIGURE 7.19 U.S. Poverty Rates by Age and Sex, 2018

Source: Semega et al., 2019.

absolute poverty

a level of economic deprivation that exists when people do not have the means to secure the most basic necessities of life.

relative poverty

a level of economic deprivation that exists when people may be able to afford basic necessities but are still unable to maintain an average standard of living.

feminization of poverty

the trend in which women are disproportionately represented among individuals living in poverty.

persons were unemployed in the United States, making the unemployment rate 3.5 percent. The unemployment rate for adult men was 3.1 percent and for adult women 3.2 percent, but it was 12.6 percent for teenagers. Although the unemployment rate for whites was 3.2 percent, African Americans (blacks) had an unemployment rate of 5.9 percent, while the rate for Hispanics was 4.2 percent and for Asians was 2.5 percent. However, over 20 percent of the unemployed had been jobless for twenty-seven weeks or more. This means that 1.2 million individuals were considered to be “long term unemployed” (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2020). Unemployment rates are difficult to calculate because persons are no longer counted as unemployed if they drop out of the labor market and are no longer actively looking for a job.

In addition to unemployment, low wages paid for many jobs are another major cause of poverty: Although most working families are not officially poor, many are “near poor” or “low income,” struggling to pay for basic needs such as housing, health care, food, childcare, and transportation. Nearly one in three working families in the United States is a “low-income” family, earning less than 200 percent of the U.S. poverty threshold.

Structural problems contribute to both unemployment and underemployment. Corporations have been disinvesting in the United States, displacing millions of people from their jobs. Economists refer to this displacement as the *deindustrialization of America*. Even as they have closed their U.S. factories and plants, many corporations have opened new facilities in other countries where lower-wage labor exists because people will, of necessity, work for lower wages. Many analysts have documented how the relocation of domestic manufacturing offshore has drained millions of manufacturing jobs from the U.S. economy.

Job deskilling—a reduction in the proficiency needed to perform a specific job—leads to a corresponding reduction in the wages for that job or in the use of nonhuman technologies to perform the work. This kind of deskilling has resulted from the computerization and automation of



Dmitry Kalinovsky/Shutterstock.com

FIGURE 7.20 Many women are among the “working poor,” who, although employed full time, have jobs in service occupations that are typically lower-paying and less secure than jobs in other sections of the labor market. Does the nature of women’s work contribute to the feminization of poverty in the United States?

the workplace. A significant step in job deskilling occurs when the primary responsibility of human operators is to monitor automated systems. The eventual outcome of such deskilling is that human operators either do not know what to do when the system fails or they are replaced entirely by automated technology. Other structural problems include the overall shift from manufacturing to service occupations in the United States, which has resulted in the loss of higher-paying positions and their replacement with lower-paying and less secure positions that do not offer the wages, job stability, or advancement potential of the disappearing jobs.

Technological advances and changing patterns of consumerism have also contributed to unemployment in the United States and other high-income nations. For example, the introduction of smartphones, tablets, and other electronic devices means that fewer people now own a watch, camera, calculator, printed calendar, or numerous other features (or apps) found on the typical

smartphone or tablet. As a result, fewer people are needed to design, make, and repair numerous items that created jobs for millions in the past. The Internet has also contributed to a decline in hundreds of thousands of jobs in the postal, publishing, and printing industries as people now email or text one another or self-publish their ideas rather than going the traditional route. For example, thousands of postal jobs have disappeared because of a dramatic reduction in the number of items to be delivered, and automated systems have reduced the number of workers employed at the post office itself.

Solving the Poverty Problem

The United States has attempted to solve the poverty problem in several ways. One of the most enduring is referred to as social welfare. When most people think of “welfare,” they think of food stamps (currently called SNAP) and programs such as Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) or the earlier program it replaced, Aid to Families with



FIGURE 7.21 Electronic benefit transfer (EBT) cards represent a contemporary approach to helping people of limited income purchase groceries. Data-encoded cards such as this one from California were developed to prevent people from trading or selling traditional food stamps as allegedly had occurred in the past.

Dependent Children (AFDC). Some who receive benefits from welfare programs tend to be stigmatized, even when our nation describes itself as having compassion for the less fortunate (■ Figure 7.21).

What can we do to reduce or solve the poverty problem in the next decades of the twenty-first century? This is a pressing issue we must think about now because it is definitely not a problem that will get better without active intervention by others at the individual, community, state, and national levels.

Sociological Explanations of Social Inequality in the United States

Obviously, some people are disadvantaged as a result of social inequality. In this section we examine some sociological explanations of social inequality. In doing so we see how different sociologists answer the question, Is inequality always harmful to society?

Functionalist Perspectives

According to well-known classical sociologists Kingsley Davis and Wilbert Moore (1945), inequality is not only inevitable but also necessary for the smooth functioning of society. The Davis-Moore thesis, which has become the definitive functionalist explanation for social inequality, can be summarized as follows:

1. All societies have important tasks that must be accomplished and certain positions that must be filled.
2. Some positions are more important for the survival of society than others.

3. The most important positions must be filled by the most qualified people (see ■ Figure 7.22).
4. The positions that are the most important for society and that require scarce talent, extensive training, or both must be the most highly rewarded.
5. The most highly rewarded positions should be those that are functionally unique (no other position can perform the same function) and on which other positions rely for expertise, direction, or financing.

Davis and Moore use the physician as an example of a functionally unique position. Doctors are very important to society and require extensive training, but individuals would not be motivated to go through years of costly and stressful medical training without incentives to do so. The Davis-Moore thesis assumes that social stratification results in *meritocracy*—a hierarchy in which all positions are rewarded based on people's ability and credentials.

A key problem with the Davis-Moore thesis is that it ignores inequalities based on inherited wealth and intergenerational family status. The thesis assumes that economic rewards and prestige are the only effective motivators for people and fails to take into account other intrinsic aspects of work, such as self-fulfillment. It also does not adequately explain how such a reward system guarantees that the most qualified people will gain access to the most highly rewarded positions.

Conflict Perspectives

From a conflict perspective, people with economic and political power are able to shape and distribute the rewards, resources, privileges, and opportunities in society for their own benefit. Conflict theorists do not believe that inequality serves as a motivating force for people; they argue that powerful individuals and groups use ideology to maintain their favored positions at the expense of others. Core values in the United States emphasize the importance of material possessions, hard work, individual initiative to get ahead, and behavior that supports the existing social structure. These same values support the prevailing resource-distribution system and contribute to social inequality.

Are wealthy people smarter than others? According to conflict theorists, certain stereotypes suggest that this is the case; however, the wealthy may actually be “smarter” than others only in the sense of having “chosen” to be born to wealthy parents from whom they could inherit assets.

job deskilling

a reduction in the proficiency needed to perform a specific job that leads to a corresponding reduction in the wages for that job or in the use of nonhuman technologies to perform the work.

meritocracy

a hierarchy in which all positions are rewarded based on people's ability and credentials.



Suzanne Kreiter/Boston Globe/Getty Images

FIGURE 7.22 According to a functionalist perspective, people such as these recent Harvard graduates are likely to attain high positions in society because they are the most qualified and they work the hardest. Do you believe that our society is a meritocracy—a hierarchy in which all positions are rewarded based on people’s ability and credentials? Why or why not?

Conflict theorists also note that laws and informal social norms support inequality in the United States. For the first half of the twentieth century, both legalized and institutionalized segregation and discrimination reinforced employment discrimination and produced higher levels of economic inequality. Although laws have been passed to make these overt acts of discrimination illegal, many forms of discrimination still exist in educational and employment opportunities.

Symbolic Interactionist Perspectives

Symbolic interactionists focus on microlevel concerns and usually do not analyze larger structural factors that contribute to inequality and poverty. However, many significant insights on the effects of wealth and poverty on people’s lives and social interactions can be derived from applying a symbolic interactionist approach. Using qualitative research methods and influenced by a symbolic interactionist approach, researchers have collected the personal narratives of people across all social classes, ranging from the wealthiest to the poorest people in the United States.

A few studies provide rare insights into the social interactions between people from vastly divergent class locations. Sociologist Judith Rollins’s (1985) classic study of the relationship between household workers and their employers examined rituals of deference that were often demanded by elite white women of their domestic workers, who were frequently women of color. According to well-known classical sociologist Erving Goffman (1967), *deference* is a type of ceremonial activity that functions as a symbolic means whereby appreciation is regularly conveyed to a recipient. In fact, deferential behavior between nonequals (such as employers and employees) confirms the inequality of the relationship and each party’s position in the relationship relative to the other. Rollins identified three types of linguistic deference between domestic workers and their employers: use of the first names of the workers, contrasted with titles and last names (Mrs. Adams, for example) of the employers; use of the term *girls* to refer to female household workers regardless of their age; and deferential references to employers, such as “Yes, ma’am.” Spatial demeanor, including touching and how close one person stands to another, is an additional factor in deference.

CONCEPT Quick Review	
Sociological Explanations of Social Inequality in the United States	
Functionalist Perspectives	Some degree of social inequality is necessary for the smooth functioning of society (in order to fill the most important positions) and thus is inevitable.
Conflict Perspectives	Powerful individuals and groups use ideology to maintain their favored positions in society at the expense of others.
Symbolic Interactionist Perspectives	The beliefs and actions of people reflect their class location in society.

rituals across class lines. Rollins (1985: 232) concludes the following:

The employer, in her more powerful position, sets the essential tone of the relationship; and that tone . . . is one that functions to reinforce the inequality of the relationship, to strengthen the employer's belief in the rightness of her advantaged class and racial position, and to provide her with justification for the inegalitarian social system.

Many concepts introduced by sociologist Erving Goffman (1959, 1967) could be used as springboards for examining microlevel relationships between inequality and people's everyday interactions. What could you learn about class-based inequality in the United States by using a symbolic interactionist approach to examine a setting with which you are familiar?

The Concept Quick Review summarizes the three major perspectives on social inequality in the United States.

Looking Ahead: U.S. Stratification in the Future

The United States continues to face one of the greatest economic challenges it has experienced since the Great Depression of the 1930s. Although we have strong hopes that the American Dream will remain alive and well, many people are concerned about the lack of upward mobility for many Americans and a decline for others. The nationwide slump in affordable housing and jobs that pay a living wage has distressed people, and continued high rates of long-term unemployment, especially among older workers, and a shifting stock market bring about weekly media predictions that things are either getting slightly better or are becoming worse. Perhaps one of the most critical factors contributing to a lack of optimism about future mobility is the vast and ever-growing wealth gap between the rich and everyone else and the depth of poverty in this country.

Given the current political and economic situation, it is difficult to predict the future of the U.S. system of stratification. What will happen with the great economic imbalance in the United States? Robert Reich (2010:146), former U.S. Secretary of Labor and now Professor of Public Policy at the University of California at Berkeley, summed up the problem a decade ago:

None of us can thrive in a nation divided between a small number of people receiving an ever larger share of the nation's income and wealth, and everyone else receiving a declining share. The lopsidedness not only diminishes economic growth but also tears at the fabric of our society. America cannot succeed if the basic bargain at the heart of our economy remains broken. The most fortunate among us who have reached the pinnacles of power and success depend on a stable economic and political system. That stability rests on the public's trust that the system operates in the interest of us all. Any loss of such trust threatens the well-being of everyone.

Given this assessment, politicians, business leaders, and ordinary people must do all they can to reinvigorate the American Dream, or everyone's future—young and old alike—will look much dimmer as we continue on through the century.

In the end of the second decade of the twenty-first century, it is alarming to see headlines such as "Middle Class Shrinks Further . . .". If more than half of U.S. households were in the middle class in the late 1960s, what has happened? Why have more people fallen to the bottom of the class structure? Middle-class couples with children are among those having the hardest time holding their place in the structure. The main route to the middle class has been through higher education, and no one needs to tell you as a college student that this is an often expensive and very time-consuming pursuit.

Until median incomes improve and more middle-class jobs are available, people have to find innovative ways to increase their income and improve their lifestyle. Some work several jobs; others create a niche for themselves in social media or other newer technologies that did not even exist a few years ago. Overall, the bottom-line question becomes how to handle the rapidly growing gap between the highest income and wealth group and everyone else.

Are we sabotaging our future if we do not work constructively to eliminate vast income inequalities and high rates of poverty? It has been said that a chain is no stronger than its weakest link. If we apply this idea to the problem of vast income inequality and high rates of poverty, then it is to our advantage to see that those who cannot find work or do not have a job that provides a living wage receive adequate training and employment. Innovative programs can combine job training with producing something useful to meet the immediate needs of people living in poverty. Children of today—the adults of tomorrow—need nutrition, education, health care, and safety as they grow up (see the "You Can Make a Difference" box).

YOU CAN **Make a Difference**

Students Helping Others through The Campus Kitchen

- The Campus Kitchen at Baylor University recovered over 14,900 pounds of food from on-campus dining halls and Panera Bread's day-end Dough-Nation Program in 2018.
- Food that was recovered was delivered to The Salvation Army Men's Center and Caritas food bank in Waco, Texas, where it helped feed many hungry persons.
- Fresh and nutritious meals were also cooked for 5,240 people at Mission Waco Youth Center, The Cove, and The Family Abuse Center.
- Baylor's community gardens produced the harvest that was used in meals prepared by students and provided food to people who otherwise did not have access fresh produce. This program is under the auspices of Baylor University's Academy for Leadership Development (2019).

More About the Campus Kitchen Project

"My life has gotten to the point where if I'm not in class I'm sleeping or doing something for Campus Kitchen. . . . So, I'll let y'all in on a little secret: Campus Kitchen is worth being excited about." (Statement by Amy Heard, 2011, while she was a Baylor University student and involved in Campus Kitchen)

Would you like to know more about Campus Kitchen? In 2019, more than sixty college campuses were involved in this on-campus student service program. The Campus Kitchen Project was begun by Robert Egger, director of the nonprofit D.C. Central Kitchen in Washington, D.C. In 2019, it was announced that Campus Kitchen Project and Food Recovery Network were uniting to expand food recovery on college and university campuses across the country. This change will link a national organization with individual Campus Kitchens on various campuses and will provide even greater opportunities to recover and donate surplus food to individuals in need.

Each college involved in Campus Kitchen provides on-campus kitchen space and donated food from their cafeterias

and other sources to help feed individuals in their community and, in some cases, food for students on campus who are unable to afford adequate nutritious food for their own use. As previously mentioned, in addition to food recovery, delivery, and cooking, some campus groups, including the one at Baylor University, have community gardens in which people water, prune, harvest, or deliver fresh produce. This is most important for people living in low-income areas where it is difficult to get fresh, affordable fruits and vegetables in order to eat a balanced diet and have proper nutrition.

Can you think of ways that unserved, usable food could be recovered from your college or university or other places where you eat so the food could be redistributed to persons in need? For more information, check the websites of the following organizations:

- Campus Kitchen Project
- Food Recovery Network



AP Images/Amy Sinisterra

Here is an example of Campus Kitchen at work. These Gonzaga University undergraduates are using leftovers from the dining hall to put together meals for the needy. Does your college have a similar program?

Q&A Chapter Review

Use these questions and answers to check how well you've achieved the learning objectives set out at the beginning of this chapter.

LO1 What is social stratification, and how do the major systems of stratification compare?

Social stratification is the hierarchical arrangement of large social groups based on their control over basic resources. People are treated differently based on where they are positioned within the social hierarchies of class, race, gender, and age. Stratification systems include slavery, caste, and class. Slavery, an extreme form of stratification in which people are owned or controlled by others, is a closed system. The caste system is also a closed one in which people's status is determined at birth based on their parents' position in society. The class system, which exists in the United States, is a type of stratification based on ownership of resources and on the type of work that people do.

LO2 How did Karl Marx view social class?

Marx viewed social class as a key determinant of social inequality and social change. For Marx, class position and the extent of our income and wealth are determined by our work situation or our relationship to the means of production. Marx stated that capitalistic societies consist of two classes—the capitalists and the workers—and class relationships involve inequality and exploitation.

LO3 What is Max Weber's analysis of social class?

Weber emphasized that no single factor (such as economic divisions between capitalists and workers) was sufficient for defining the location of categories of people within the class structure. Weber developed a multidimensional concept of stratification that focuses on the interplay of wealth, prestige, and power.

LO4 What are the contemporary sociological models of class structure in the United States?

In contemporary times, no broad consensus exists about how to characterize the class structure in this country. Sociologists have developed two models of the class structure: One is based on a Weberian approach, the other on a Marxian approach. In the Weberian-based approach, social classes are based on three elements: education, occupation of family head, and family income. This approach to class structure consists of the upper class, the upper-middle class, the middle class, the working class, the working poor, and the underclass. Contemporary Marxian models examine class in terms of people's relationship to others in the production process.

LO5 What is the difference between income inequality and wealth inequality?

Income is the economic gain derived from wages, salaries, income transfers (governmental aid), and ownership of property. Wealth includes property such as buildings, land, farms, houses, factories, and cars, as well as other assets such as bank accounts, corporate stocks, bonds, and insurance policies. Wealth is even more unevenly distributed than income.

LO6 What are the important consequences of income inequality and wealth inequality in the United States?

The stratification of society into different social groups results in wide discrepancies in income and wealth and in variable access to available goods and services. People with high income or wealth have greater opportunity to control their own lives. They can afford better housing, more education, and a wider range of medical services. People with less income have fewer life chances and must spend their limited resources to acquire basic necessities. People with greater amounts of wealth have more assets they potentially can pass on to the next generation in their family or to give philanthropic gifts to organizations that immortalize them.

LO7 What are the key aspects of poverty in the United States?

Some of the key aspects of poverty in the United States are age, gender, and race. Children have a greater risk of being poor than do older adults, and women have a higher rate of poverty than do men. Although whites account for approximately two-thirds of those below the poverty line, people of color account for a disproportionate share of the impoverished in the United States.

LO8 How do major sociological explanations of social inequality in the United States compare?

Functionalist perspectives view classes as broad groupings of people who share similar levels of privilege on the basis of their roles in the occupational structure. According to the Davis-Moore thesis, stratification exists in all societies, and some inequality is not only inevitable but also necessary for the ongoing functioning of society. The positions that are most important within society and that require the most talent and training must be highly rewarded. Conflict perspectives on class are based on the assumption that social stratification is created and maintained by one group (typically the capitalist class) in order to enhance and protect

its own economic interests. Conflict theorists measure class according to people's relationships with others in the production process. Unlike functionalist and conflict perspectives that focus on macrolevel inequalities in societies, symbolic interactionist views focus on microlevel inequalities such as how social class may positively or negatively influence one's identity and everyday social interactions. Symbolic interactionists use terms such as *social cohesion* and *deference* to explain how class binds some individuals together while categorically separating out others.

LO9 What will be the future of the U.S. system of social stratification?

Vast income inequality and wealth inequality in the United States are indicators that social stratification in this nation will continue to intensify. Simply stated, "The rich will grow richer, and the poor will grow poorer." If this does in fact occur, the American Dream will be out of the reach of the majority of people, and the stability of the nation may be shaken by the public's general lack of trust that the stratification system operates in the interest of all residents.

Key Terms

absolute poverty 208	intragenerational mobility 190	slavery 190
alienation 193	job deskilling 210	social mobility 190
capitalist class (bourgeoisie) 193	life chances 189	social stratification 189
caste system 191	meritocracy 211	socioeconomic status (SES) 196
class conflict 194	official poverty line 207	underclass 199
class system 193	pink-collar occupations 198	wealth 195
feminization of poverty 208	power 196	working class (proletariat) 193
income 202	prestige 195	
intergenerational mobility 190	relative poverty 208	

Questions for Critical Thinking

- 1 Based on Max Weber's model of wealth, power, and prestige, how do celebrities such as Jay-Z and Beyoncé become wealthy and well known worldwide? Where do individuals such as these fit in Weber's system of stratification?
- 2 Should employment be based on meritocracy, need, or affirmative-action-type policies designed to bring about greater diversity?
- 3 What might happen in the United States if the gap between rich and poor continues to widen?

Answers to **Sociology Quiz**

Wealth, Poverty, and the American Dream

1	False	In national polls, less than a third of U.S. adults indicate they believe they have achieved the American Dream.
2	False	The age group that includes people ages sixty-five and over actually has the lowest rate of poverty of any age group in the United States.
3	True	The United States has one of the highest rates of childhood poverty of any industrialized country. In 2018 nearly one in five U.S. children lived in poverty.
4	False	In 2019 a family of four in the 48 contiguous U.S. states would have to earn less than \$25,750 to be considered below the poverty line. By contrast, the poverty threshold for a family of four in Hawaii was \$29,620 as compared with \$32,190 in Alaska.
5	True	<i>Forbes</i> magazine's 2019 list of the richest people in the world identified Amazon founder Jeff Bezos as the wealthiest person in the world, with a net worth of \$107.8 billion.
6	True	The U.S. State Department estimates that between 15,000 and 50,000 women and girls are trafficked into the United States each year where they are enslaved in agriculture and domestic work and the sex industry.
7	True	As of January 2018, twenty-nine states, plus Washington, D.C., had set higher minimum wages than the federal minimum wage.
8	False	The gap between the top 1 percent of income-earners and the other 99 percent of income-earners in the United States has widened very significantly. The top 1 percent of families now earn an average of more than twenty-five times as much as the bottom 99 percent.

Sources: Based on *Forbes*, 2019; Semega et al., 2019.





Global Stratification

8

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- 1** **Describe** wealth and poverty from a global perspective.
- 2** **Explain** the levels of the development approach to studying global inequality.
- 3** **Compare** the World Bank economic categories of nations.
- 4** **Explain** the concepts associated with the measurement of global wealth and poverty.
- 5** **Discuss** human development as a crucial factor in fighting poverty.
- 6** **Explain** the modernization theory of global inequality and Walt W. Rostow's four stages of economic development.
- 7** **Describe** the features of dependency theory in the context of global inequality.
- 8** **Discuss** world systems theory in the context of global inequality.
- 9** **Describe** the new international division of labor theory in the context of global inequality.
- 10** **Discuss** global inequality from contemporary and future perspectives.

Media Drum World/Alamy Stock Photo

SOCIOLOGY & **Everyday Life**

Leaving the Snare of Poverty

Angeline Mugwendere's parents were impoverished farmers in Zimbabwe, and she was mocked by classmates when she went to school barefoot and in a torn dress with nothing underneath. Teachers would sternly send her home to collect school fees that were overdue, even though everyone knew there was no way her family could pay them. Yet Angeline suffered the humiliations and teasing and pleaded to be allowed to remain in school. Unable to buy school supplies, she cadged [asked for] what she could.

"At break time, I would go to a teacher's house and say, 'Can I wash your dishes?'" she remembers. "And in return, they would sometimes give me a pen."

—In their best-selling book *Half the Sky*, journalists Nicholas D. Kristof and Sheryl WuDunn (2009: 179) describe how some impoverished girls have benefited from efforts to eradicate global poverty. Through help from organizations such as Campaign for Female Education (Camfed), Angeline acquired an education,

moved out of poverty, and eventually became Camfed's executive director.



Mark Ashe/ZUMA Press/New York/New York/U.S./Newscom

How does poverty affect the educational opportunities of children in poor countries such as Zimbabwe?

Global poverty affects people in a variety of ways. For some, it means absolute poverty because they do not have even the basic necessities to survive. For others, poverty is relative: Their standard of living remains below that of other people who reside in their nation and around the world. Without the intervention of individuals or organizations such as the one that helped Angeline Mugwendere attain more education and find productive employment, young people may be mired in hardscrabble poverty from which there is little possibility of escape. Consequently, their children are also born into poverty, and the cycle continues across generations.

Regardless of where people live in the world, social and economic inequalities are pressing daily concerns. Poverty and inequality know no political boundaries or national borders. Even within countries that are designated as "high income," many people live in poverty. Likewise, some wealthy people live in "low-income nations." Disparities between the rich and the poor within one high-income country may be greater than inequalities based on wealth and income that exist among some people who live in nations identified as middle income or low income. In this chapter we examine global stratification and inequality and discuss sociological perspectives that have been developed to explain the nature and extent of this problem. Before reading on, test your knowledge of global wealth and poverty by taking the "Sociology and Everyday Life" quiz. ●

Wealth and Poverty in Global Perspective

What do we mean by global stratification? **Global stratification** refers to the unequal distribution of wealth, power, and prestige on a global basis, resulting in people having vastly different lifestyles and life chances both within and among the nations of the world. Just as the United States is divided into classes, the world is divided into unequal segments characterized by extreme differences in wealth and poverty. For example, a major geographical imbalance exists in the distribution of household wealth between North America and Latin America, India, and Africa when you consider the share of the adult population in percentages as compared to the share of total wealth in each region. As reported by Credit Suisse's Research Institute (2019):

North America and Europe together account for 57% of total household wealth but contain only 17% of the world adult population. The two regions had similar total wealth at one time, but North America now accounts for 32% of global wealth compared to 25% for Europe. Elsewhere, the share of wealth is below

How Much Do You Know About Global Wealth and Poverty?

TRUE	FALSE		
T	F	1	Poverty has been increasing in the United States but decreasing in other nations because of globalization.
T	F	2	The assets of the world's five hundred richest people are more than the combined assets of over 50 percent of the world's population.
T	F	3	More than 500 million people worldwide live below the international poverty line, earning less than \$1.90 each day.
T	F	4	Although poverty is a problem in most areas of the world, relatively few people die of causes arising from poverty.
T	F	5	In low-income countries, the problem of poverty is unequally shared between men and women.
T	F	6	The majority of people with incomes below the poverty line live in urban areas of the world.
T	F	7	Worldwide, two-thirds of adults (fifteen years of age and older) who are not able to read and write are men.
T	F	8	Poor people in low-income countries meet most of their energy needs by burning wood, dung, and agricultural wastes, which increases health hazards and environmental degradation.

Answers can be found at the end of the chapter.

the population share. The discrepancy is modest in China and in the Asia-Pacific region (excluding China and India, which are treated separately due to the size of their respective populations) where the population share is 20%–30% higher than the wealth share. But the population share is more than three times the wealth share in Latin America, five times the wealth share in India, and over ten times the wealth share in Africa.

An important takeaway from this statement is the extent to which North America and Europe control the majority of all household wealth even though these two regions account for only 17 percent of the world adult population. This is a real-life example of what is meant by global wealth inequality.

As previously defined, *high-income countries* have highly industrialized economies; technologically advanced industrial, administrative, and service occupations; and relatively high levels of national and per capita (per person) income. In contrast, *middle-income countries* have industrializing economies, particularly in urban areas, and moderate levels of national and personal income. *Low-income countries* have little industrialization and low levels of national and personal income.

Although some progress has been made in reducing extreme poverty and child mortality rates while improving health and literacy rates in some lower-income countries, the overall picture remains bleak. Many people have sought to address the issue of world poverty and to determine ways in which resources can be used to meet the urgent challenge of poverty. However, not much progress has been made on this front despite a great deal of talk and billions of dollars in “foreign aid” flowing from high-income nations to low-income nations. The idea of “development” has become one of the primary means used in attempts to reduce social and economic inequalities and alleviate the worst effects of poverty in the less industrialized nations of the world.

As we take a closer look at global stratification, there are a number of problems inherent in studying this issue, one of which is what terminology should be used to describe various nations. As we shall now see, a lack of consensus exists among political, economic, and social leaders on this topic.

global stratification

the unequal distribution of wealth, power, and prestige on a global basis, resulting in people having vastly different lifestyles and life chances both within and among the nations of the world.

Problems in Studying Global Inequality

One of the primary problems encountered by social scientists studying global stratification and social and economic inequality is what terminology should be used to refer to the distribution of resources in various nations. During the past seventy years, major changes have occurred in the way that inequality is addressed by organizations such as the United Nations and the World Bank. Most definitions of inequality are based on comparisons of levels of income or economic development, whereby countries are identified in terms of the “three worlds” or upon their levels of economic development.

The “Three Worlds” Approach

After World War II, the terms *first world*, *second world*, and *third world* were introduced by social analysts to distinguish among nations on the basis of their levels of economic development and the standard of living of their citizens. *First-world* nations were said to consist of the rich, industrialized nations that primarily had capitalist economic systems and democratic political systems. The most frequently noted first-world nations were the United States, Canada, Japan, Great Britain, Australia, and New Zealand. *Second-world* nations were said to be countries with at least a moderate level of economic development and a moderate standard of living. These nations included China, Vietnam, Cuba, and portions of the former Soviet Union. According to social analysts, although the quality of life in second-world nations was not comparable to that of life in the first world, it was far greater than that of people living in the *third world*—the poorest countries, with little or no industrialization and the lowest standards of living, shortest life expectancies, and highest rates of mortality. Examples of these nations included Democratic Republic of the Congo, Liberia, Niger, and Sierra Leone.

The Levels of Development Approach

Among the most controversial terminology used for describing world poverty and global stratification has been the language of development. Terminology based on levels of development includes concepts such as developed nations, developing nations, less-developed nations, and underdevelopment. Let’s look first at the contemporary origins of the idea of “underdevelopment” and “underdeveloped nations.”

Following World War II, the concepts of *underdevelopment* and *underdeveloped nations* emerged out of the Marshall Plan (named after U.S. Secretary of State George C. Marshall), which provided massive sums of money in direct aid and loans to rebuild the European economic base destroyed during World War II. Given the Marshall Plan’s success in rebuilding much of Europe, U.S. political

leaders decided that the Southern Hemisphere nations that had recently been released from European colonialism could also benefit from massive financial infusion and rapid economic development. Leaders of the developed nations argued that urgent problems such as poverty, disease, and famine could be reduced through the transfer of finance, technology, and experience from the developed nations to lesser-developed countries. From this viewpoint, economic development is the primary way to solve the poverty problem: Hadn’t economic growth brought the developed nations to their own high standard of living?

Ideas regarding *underdevelopment* were popularized by President Harry S. Truman in his 1949 inaugural address. According to Truman, the nations in the Southern Hemisphere were “underdeveloped areas” because of their low gross national product, which today is referred to as *gross national income (GNI)*—a term that refers to all the goods and services produced in a country in a given year, plus the net income earned outside the country by individuals or corporations. If nations could increase their GNI, then social and economic inequality among the citizens within the country could also be reduced. Accordingly, Truman believed that it was necessary to assist the people of economically underdeveloped areas to raise their *standard of living*, by which he meant material well-being that can be measured by the quality of goods and services that may be purchased by the per capita national income. Thus, an increase in the standard of living meant that a nation was moving toward economic development, which typically included the exploitation of natural resources by industrial development.

What has happened to the issue of development since the post-World War II era? After several decades of economic development fostered by organizations such as the United Nations and the World Bank, it became apparent by the 1970s that improving a country’s GNI did not tend to reduce the poverty of the poorest people in that country. In fact, global poverty and inequality were increasing, and the initial optimism of a speedy end to underdevelopment faded.

Why did inequality increase even with greater economic development? Some analysts in the developed nations began to link growing social and economic inequality on a global basis to relatively high rates of population growth taking place in the underdeveloped nations (■ Figure 8.1). Organizations such as the United Nations and the World Health Organization stepped up their efforts to provide family planning services to the populations so that they could control their own fertility. However, population researchers are now aware that issues such as population growth, economic development, and environmental problems must be seen as interdependent concerns. After the U.N. Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil (the “Earth Summit”) in 1992, terms such as *underdevelopment* were dropped by many analysts.



FIGURE 8.1 Some analysts believe that growing global social and economic inequality is related to high rates of population growth taking place in underdeveloped nations. Why might this be so?

John Wollwerth/Shutterstock.com

Classification of Economies by Income

The World Bank classifies nations into four economic categories and establishes the upper and lower limits for the gross national income (GNI) in each category.

Low-income economies had a GNI per capita of less than \$1,025 in 2019, *lower-middle-income economies* had a GNI per capita between \$1,026 and \$3,995, *upper-middle-income economies* had a GNI per capita between \$3,996 and \$12,375, and *high-income economies* had a GNI per capita of \$12,336 or more (World Bank, 2019a).

Low-Income Economies

Currently, about thirty-one nations are classified by the World Bank *World Development Report* (2019c) as low-income economies with a GNI per capita of \$1,025 or less. In these economies, many people engage in agricultural pursuits, reside in nonurban areas, and are impoverished. As shown in ■ Figure 8.2,

low-income economies are primarily found in countries in Asia and Africa, where half of the world's population resides.

Among those most affected by poverty in low-income economies are women and children. Why is this true? Fertility rates remain high in low-income economies. In all nations the poor have higher fertility rates than the wealthy residing within the same country. Other factors that contribute to the poverty of women and children are lack of

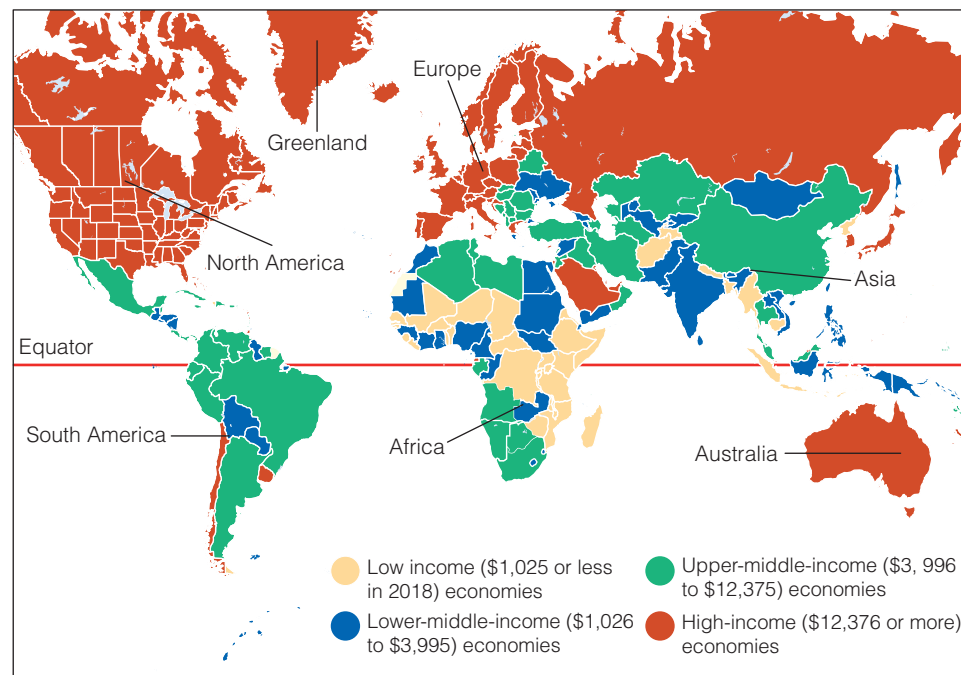


FIGURE 8.2 High-, Middle-, and Low-Income Economies in Global Perspective

Source: World Bank, 2019b.

educational opportunity, disadvantage in control over resources and assets in the household, gender disparities in work, and lower overall pay than men. To learn more about gender inequality worldwide, go online to the World Bank's *World Development Report*.

Middle-Income Economies

About a third of the world's population resides in a middle-income economy. As previously stated, the World Bank has subdivided the middle-income economies into two categories—the lower-middle income (\$1,026–3,995) and the upper-middle income (\$3,996–12,375). Countries classified as lower-middle income include Bangladesh, Kenya, Myanmar, Senegal, and Zimbabwe. In recent years, millions of people have migrated from the world's poorest nations in hopes of finding better economic conditions elsewhere.

As compared with lower-middle-income economies, nations having upper-middle-income economies typically have a somewhat higher standard of living. Nations with upper-middle-income economies include Albania, Algeria, Argentina, Fiji, Georgia, and Paraguay. Some of these nations export a diverse variety of goods and services, ranging from manufactured goods to raw materials and fuels.

High-Income Economies

High-income economies (a gross national income per capita of \$12,376 or more in 2019) are found in nations such as the United States, Canada, Japan, Australia,

Portugal, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Norway, and United Arab Emirates. According to the World Bank, people in high-income economies typically have a higher standard of living than those in low-and middle-income economies, but income is only one indicator of overall human development.

Nations with high-income economies continue to dominate the world economy, despite the fact that shifts in the global marketplace have affected workers who have a mismatch between their schooling and workplace skills and the availability of job opportunities. Another problem is *capital flight*—the movement of jobs and economic resources from one nation to another—because transnational corporations have found a ready-and-willing pool of workers worldwide to perform jobs for lower wages. In the United States and other industrialized nations, the process of *deindustrialization*—the closing of plants and factories—because of their obsolescence or the movement of work to other regions of the country or to other nations has contributed to shifts in the global marketplace. In the twenty-first century, there is some hope for job recovery as companies such as Tesla Motors, a designer and manufacturer of electric vehicles, have opened plants in the United States and returned thousands of jobs to areas where other industries were previously located (■ Figure 8.3). For example, Tesla's Fremont, California, plant is in the former New United Motor Manufacturing plant, a failed joint venture between General Motors and Toyota that closed in 2010. (The Concept Quick Review describes economies classified by income.)



Noah Berger/Bloomberg/Getty Images

FIGURE 8.3 Although capital flight and deindustrialization have produced problems in the U.S. economy, many job sectors continue to offer opportunities for workers. These Tesla employees on the assembly line in Fremont, California, are adding seat belts to the company's Model S electric sedans.

Measuring Global Wealth and Poverty

On a global basis, measuring wealth and poverty is a difficult task because of conceptual problems and problems in acquiring comparable data from various nations. As well, over time, some indicators, such as the literacy rate, become less useful in helping analysts determine what progress is being made in reducing poverty.

Absolute, Relative, and Subjective Poverty

How is poverty defined on a global basis? Isn't it more a matter of comparison than an absolute standard? According to social scientists, defining poverty involves more than comparisons of personal or household income; it also involves social judgments made by researchers. From this point of view, *absolute poverty*—previously defined as a condition in which people do not have the means to secure the most basic necessities of life—would be measured by comparing personal or household income or expenses with the cost of buying a given quantity of goods and services. The World Bank has defined absolute poverty as living on less than \$1.90 per day. It was estimated that about 10 percent of the world's population lived in absolute poverty in 2018. The World Bank (2018) projects that fewer people were living in extreme poverty in 2018 than in 2013, when the figure was at 11 percent, but the decline in poverty rates has slowed in recent years. Unlike absolute poverty, *relative poverty* exists when people may be able to afford basic necessities but are still unable to maintain an average standard of living. Relative poverty is measured by comparing one person's income with the incomes of others. Finally, *subjective poverty* is measured by comparing a person's actual income against his or her expectations and perceptions.

For low-income nations in a state of economic transition, data on income and levels of consumption are typically difficult to obtain and are often ambiguous when

they are available. Defining levels of poverty involves several dimensions: (1) how many people are poor, (2) how far below the poverty line people's incomes fall, and (3) how long they have been poor (is the poverty temporary or long term?).

The Gini Coefficient and Global Quality-of-Life Issues

One measure of income inequality is the *Gini coefficient*, which measures the degree of inequality in the distribution of family income in a country. In technical terms the Gini Index measures the extent to which the distribution of income (or consumption expenditures) among individuals or households within an economy deviates from a perfectly equal distribution. The lower a country's score on the Gini coefficient, the more equal the income distribution. The index ranges from zero (meaning that everyone has the same income) to 100 (one person receives all the income). According to World Bank data, income inequality tends to be lower in northern Europe, with countries such as Sweden, Norway, and Finland showing some of the world's lowest Gini coefficients. It is also surprisingly low in much-less-affluent countries such as Afghanistan and Ethiopia. The highest levels of income inequality are found in countries such as the Central African Republic, Honduras, Angola, Haiti, South Africa, and Namibia. However, these data are not always strictly comparable because of differing methods and types of data collection in various countries.

Global Poverty and Human Development Issues

Income disparities are not the only factor that defines poverty and its effect on people. Although the average income per person in lower-income countries has doubled in the

CONCEPT Quick Review

Classification of Economies by Income in 2019

	Low-Income Economies	Middle-Income Economies	High-Income Economies
Previous Categorization	Third world, underdeveloped	Second world, developing	First world, developed
Per Capita Income (GNI)	\$1,025 or less	Lower middle: (\$1,026–3,995) Upper middle: \$3,996–12,375	High income: \$12,376 or more
Type of Economy	Largely agricultural	Diverse, from agricultural to manufacturing	Information based and postindustrial

past thirty years and for many years economic growth has been seen as the primary way to achieve development in low-income economies, the United Nations since the 1970s has more actively focused on human development as a crucial factor in fighting poverty. In 1990 the United Nations Development Program introduced the *human development index (HDI)*, establishing three new criteria—in addition to GNI—for measuring the level of development in a country: life expectancy, education, and living standards. According to the United Nations, human development is the process of increasing the number of choices that people have so that they can lead life to its fullest and be able to take action for themselves to improve their lives. (Figure 8.4 compares indicators such as life expectancy and per capita gross national income of various regions around the world.) The United Nations continues to monitor the progress of nations in regard to life expectancy, educational attainment, and other factors that are related to length and quality of life, as discussed in “Sociology and Social Policy.”

The top level of development category used by the United Nations is “Very High Human Development.” According to the *Human Development Report* (United Nations Development Programme, 2019), people who live in countries in the highest-human-development categories are, on average, better educated, live longer, and earn more. In a nation with very high human development, for example, the gross national income per capita averages about \$40,041, as compared to \$2,521 in countries in the low-human-development category. The top three countries in the HDI are Norway, Switzerland, and Australia. The United States was in fifteenth place in 2018. South Sudan, Chad, Central African Republic, and Niger are the four bottom countries in the 2018 HDI. In terms of human development, a child born in Niger in 2018 had a life expectancy of 62.0 years—about 20 years fewer than a child born in the same year in Norway, who had a life expectancy of 82.3 years. Overall, however,

some improvement in life expectancy rates has occurred in many nations in recent years (United Nations Development Programme, 2019).

Life Expectancy

The good news is that more people are living longer. According to the World Health Organization’s (WHO) annual statistics, low-income nations have made the most progress in increases in life expectancy. Global life expectancy has improved primarily because fewer children are dying before their fifth birthday. However, we should not become too optimistic: People in high-income, highly developed nations still have a much greater chance of living longer than people in low-income countries.

Although some advances have been made in middle- and low-HDI countries regarding increasing life expectancy, major problems still exist. The average life expectancy at birth of people in medium- or middle-HDI countries remains nearly 10 years below (69.3 years) that of people in very-high-HDI countries (79.5 years). Moreover, the life expectancy of people in low-HDI nations (61.3 years) is about 18 years fewer than that of people in very-high-HDI nations (United Nations Development Programme, 2019). Regions also vary on the basis of life expectancies: An infant born in 2018 in Latin America or the Caribbean had an average life expectancy of 75.4 years, whereas a child born in sub-Saharan Africa in the same year had a life expectancy of 61.2 years (United Nations Development Programme, 2019).

One major cause of shorter life expectancy in low-income nations is the high rate of infant mortality. The *infant mortality rate* refers to the number of deaths per thousand live births in a calendar year. Low-income countries typically have higher rates of illness and disease and they do not have adequate health-care facilities. Malnutrition is a common problem among children, many of whom are

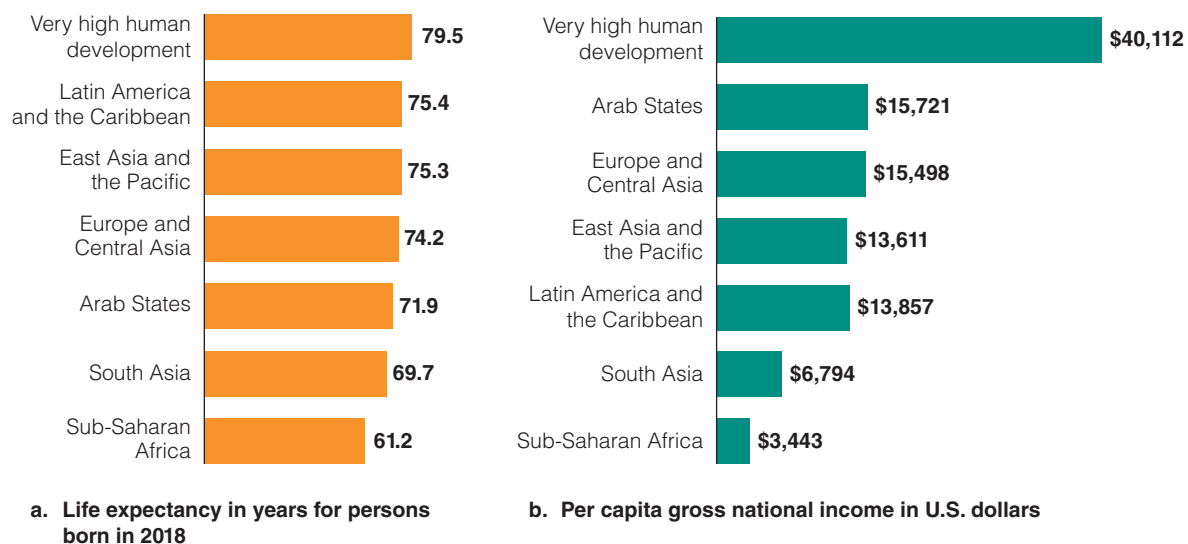


FIGURE 8.4 Indicators of Human Development

Source: United Nations Development Programme, 2019.

underweight, stunted, and anemic—a nutritional deficiency with serious consequences for child mortality.

Among adults and children alike, life expectancies are strongly affected by hunger and malnutrition. It is estimated that people in the United States spend more than \$70 billion each year on diet soft drinks, health club memberships, and other weight-loss products, whereas the world's poorest people suffer from chronic malnutrition, and many die each year from hunger-related diseases. Inadequate nutrition affects people's ability to work and to earn the income necessary for a minimum standard of living. Although some gains have been made in reducing the rate of malnourishment in some lower-income nations, nearly one billion people around the world are malnourished (United Nations Development Programme, 2019).

On the plus side of the life-expectancy problem, some nations have made positive gains, seeing average life expectancy increase in the past four decades. For example, life expectancy has improved in sub-Saharan Africa, mainly because of reductions in deaths from diarrhea, lower-respiratory-tract infections, and neonatal disorders. In countries with high- and very-high human development, life-expectancy gains are mainly driven by reductions in cardiovascular disease, some cancers, transport injuries (motor-vehicle accidents), and chronic respiratory conditions. Of course, problems of illness and mortality remain grave in regions such as sub-Saharan Africa, where overall longevity and quality of life remain highly problematic.

Health

Health refers to a condition of physical, mental, and social well-being. In other words, it is more than the absence of illness or disease. Many people in low-income nations are

far from having physical, mental, and social well-being. Between 25 and 30 million people die each year from AIDS, malaria, tuberculosis, pneumonia, diarrheal diseases, measles, and other infectious and parasitic illnesses. According to the WHO (2019a), infectious diseases are far from under control in many nations: Infectious and parasitic diseases are the leading killers of children and young adults, and these diseases have a direct link to environmental conditions and poverty, especially to unsanitary and overcrowded living conditions.

Some middle-income countries are experiencing rapid growth in degenerative diseases such as cancer and coronary heart disease, and many more deaths are expected from smoking-related illnesses. Despite the decrease in tobacco smoking in high-income countries, globally there has been an increase in per capita consumption of tobacco products. Today, nearly 80 percent of the world's one billion smokers live in low- or middle-income nations (WHO, 2019a).

Education and Literacy

Education is fundamental to improving life chances and reducing both individual and national poverty (■ Figure 8.5). People with more years of formal education tend to earn higher wages and have better jobs. Progress in education has been made in many nations, and people around the world have higher levels of education than in the past. For this reason, the United Nations *Human Development Report* uses “mean years of schooling”—completed years of educational attainment—and “expected years of schooling”—the years of schooling that a child can expect to receive given current enrollment rates—to measure progress in education.



FIGURE 8.5 In functional adult literacy programs, such as this one sponsored by the Community Action Fund for Women in Africa, women hope to gain educational skills that will lift them and their families out of poverty.

SOCIOLOGY & Social Policy

Fighting Poverty Through Global Goals for Sustainable Development

Ours can be the first generation to end poverty—and the last generation to address climate change before it is too late.

Reflecting on the [goals] and looking ahead to the next 15 years, there is no question that we can deliver on our shared responsibility to put an end to poverty, leave no one behind, and create a world of dignity for all.

Be a global citizen. Act with passion and compassion. Help us make this world safer and more sustainable today and for the generations that will follow us. That is our moral responsibility.

—Various statements from UN Secretary-General Ban-Ki Moon describing the importance of implementing new global development goals for 2016–2030 that were established by world leaders at the United Nations (Husain, 2015)

Organizations such as the United Nations establish social policy initiatives to reduce poverty and to promote education, health, and well-being. Developing effective policies for dealing with global inequality and poverty is crucial for bringing about social change. Social policy is an area of research and action that looks at the social relations necessary for people's well-being and works to build systems that promote well-being. The United Nations established seventeen global goals for sustainable development to be achieved between 2016 and 2030.



Albert Gonzalez Farran/AFP/Getty Images

Malnutrition is a widespread problem in many low-income nations. What other kinds of health problems are related to global poverty?

It is important for people to know about these goals if they are going to work. You might wish to pick the goals that you care the most about and help raise awareness through social media and your conversations with other people. The goals are shown below and on the next page (United Nations, 2019, www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/).

As you will notice, these goals call for a global partnership among all people to bring about social change. This is a tall order in a world that is deeply divided among very diverse populations of people, a world that is being



End poverty in all its forms everywhere.



End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture.



Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all people at all ages.



Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.



Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.



Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all.



Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable, and modern energy for all.



Promote sustained, inclusive, and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment, and decent work for all.



Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization, and foster innovation.



Reduce inequality within and among countries.



Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable.



Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns.



Take urgent action to combat climate change and its effects.



Conserve and use the oceans, seas, and marine resources for sustainable development.



Protect, restore, and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, halt and reverse land degradation, and halt biodiversity loss.



Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all, and build effective, accountable, and inclusive institutions at all levels.



Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development.

persons migrating from country to country seeking a safe place to live, and a world with vast economic inequalities where the statement “The rich get richer . . .” has never seemed more true.

So, what do you think: Can we do it? Can we bring about various forms of change before it is too late to do so?

Reflect & Analyze

Do you believe that social policy is an effective tool for reducing poverty? Are global policies established by international organizations such as the United Nations effective in reducing poverty and dealing with other pressing social problems?

randomly and viciously threatened by persistent acts of terrorism, a world that is experiencing severe natural disasters at a record pace, a world that has millions of

In nations with very high human development, the mean years of schooling received by people ages twenty-five and older is 12.0 years; in low-HDI nations, the average number of years is only 4.87 years. Medium-HDI countries have 6.4 mean years of schooling, compared with 8.3 years for high-HDI countries (United Nations Human Development Programme, 2019). However, the United Nations also calculates *expected* years of schooling because the agency believes that these figures better reflect changing education opportunities in developing countries. Expected years of schooling refers to the number of years of schooling that a child of school entrance age can expect to receive if prevailing patterns of age-specific enrollment rates persist throughout the child's life. For students in low-HDI countries, the expected number of years of schooling is 9.3 years, as compared to estimates of 16.4 years in very-high-HDI countries. Some progress has been made in recent years, as most low-HDI countries have achieved or are advancing toward full enrollment in elementary school.

What is the relationship between education and literacy? The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) traditionally defined a *literate person* as “someone who can, with understanding, both read and write a short, simple statement on their everyday life”; however, in the 2020s this definition has been expanded. According to UNESCO (2019), “Beyond its conventional concept as a set of reading, writing and counting skills, literacy is now understood as a means of identification, understanding, interpretation, creation, and communication in an increasingly digital, text-mediated, information-rich and fast-changing world.”

Literacy rates continue to rise among adults and youths, but it is estimated that at least 750 million youth and adults still lack basic reading and writing skills. In addition, 250 million children are failing to acquire basic literacy skills, which results in their exclusion from full participation in their communities and societies. Literacy is crucial for everyone, but it is especially important for women because it has been closely linked to decreases in fertility, improved child health, and increased earnings potential. The lowest literacy rates worldwide are found in sub-Saharan Africa and South and West Asia.

A Multidimensional Measure of Poverty

Can we solve the problem of poverty? This is an easy question to ask, but the answer is very difficult. In part, it is important to note that there are various kinds of poverty. Sometimes global poverty is defined as living on \$1.90 per day or less, but this approach overlooks other kinds of poverty indicators. Many people living in daily poverty face overlapping disadvantages, including poor health and nutrition, low education and usable skills, inadequate livelihoods, bad housing conditions, and social exclusion and lack of participation. So, thinking critically about human development and poverty requires that we examine the issue of human deprivation. As a result, the United Nations developed a global *multidimensional poverty index (MPI)* to help identify overlapping deprivations that are suffered by households regarding health, education, and living standards. The

three dimensions of the MPI—health, education, and living standards—are subdivided into ten indicators:

- Health—nutrition and child mortality
- Education—years of schooling (deprived if no household member has completed five years of school) and children enrolled
- Living standards—cooking fuel, toilet, water, electricity, floor (deprived if the household has a dirt, sand, or dung floor), and assets (deprived if the household does not own more than one of the following: radio, television, telephone, bike, or motorbike)

To be considered multidimensionally poor, households must be deprived in at least six standard-of-living indicators or in three standard-of-living indicators and one health or education indicator.

How many people are considered to be poor by these measures? About 1.3 billion people in the 101 countries covered by the MPI experience multidimensional poverty. This number constitutes about 23 percent of their total population and reflects acute deprivation in health, education, and standard of living. It is estimated that close to 900 million people are vulnerable to falling into poverty if they have financial, natural, or other setbacks (United Nations Human Development Programme, 2018).

A major contribution of the MPI is that it focuses on many aspects of poverty and calls our attention to the idea that human development involves much more than money: It includes life chances and opportunities that contribute to human well-being. Overall, countries with less human development have more multidimensional inequality and poverty. As a result, the MPI is most useful in analyzing poverty in the less developed countries of South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa and in the poorest Latin American countries.

Even with a better understanding of how to identify poverty, much remains to be done. The good news is that multidimensional poverty is on the decline for some people in some nations; however, the bad news is that a great deal of poverty still remains throughout the world.

Persistent Gaps in Human Development

Some middle- and lower-income countries have made progress in certain indicators of human development. The gap between some richer and middle- or lower-income nations has narrowed significantly for life expectancy, health, education, and income. Some of the countries in Africa that have seen notable improvements in school attendance, life expectancy, and per capita income growth have recently emerged from lengthy periods of armed conflict within their borders. For example, the Democratic Republic of the Congo has sought to reduce the negative effects of genocide, war, and periodic volcanic eruptions on people's everyday lives while also working to provide them with better educational and health-care facilities (■ Figure 8.6). However, the overall picture for the world's poorest people remains dismal. The gap between the richest and poorest *countries* has widened to



Junior D. Kamah/APP/Getty Images

FIGURE 8.6 The Heal Africa hospital (shown here) is an example of the efforts that are being made in some middle-and lower-income countries to improve quality of life for people who have experienced violence and who live in poverty.

a gulf and the gap between the richest and poorest *people* within individual countries has also widened to a gulf. As previously stated, the countries with the highest percentages of “poor” on the Multidimensional Poverty Index are all in Africa. However, South Asia has the largest absolute number of multidimensionally poor people, and many of them live in India (United Nations Human Development Programme, 2018).

Poverty, food shortages, hunger, and rapidly growing populations are pressing problems for at least two billion people, most of them women and children living in a state of absolute poverty. Although more women around the globe have paid employment than in the past, more and more women are still finding themselves in poverty because of increases in single-person and single-parent households headed by women and the fact that low-wage work is often the only source of livelihood available to them.

Human development research has reached a surprising conclusion: Economic growth and higher incomes in low- and medium-development nations are not always necessary to bring about improvements in health and education. According to the *Human Development Report*, technological improvements and changes in societal structure allow even poorer countries to bring about significant changes in health and education even without significant gains in income.

Theories of Global Inequality

Social scientists have developed a variety of theories that view the causes and consequences of global inequality. We now examine modernization theory, dependency theory, world systems theory, and the new international division of labor theory.

Development and Modernization Theory

According to some social scientists, global wealth and poverty are linked to the level of industrialization and economic development in a given society. Although the process by which a nation industrializes may vary somewhat, industrialization almost inevitably brings with it a higher standard of living and some degree of social mobility for individual participants in the society. Specifically, the traditional caste system becomes obsolete as industrialization progresses. Family status, race/ethnicity, and gender are said to become less significant in industrialized nations than in agrarian-based societies. As societies industrialize, they also urbanize as workers locate their residences near factories, offices, and other places of work. Consequently, urban values and folkways overshadow the beliefs and practices of the rural areas. Analysts using a development framework typically view industrialization and economic development as essential steps that nations must go through in order to reduce poverty and increase life chances for their citizens.

The most widely known development theory is **modernization theory**—a perspective that links global inequality to different levels of economic development and suggests that low-income economies can move to middle- and high-income economies by achieving self-sustained

modernization theory

a perspective that links global inequality to different levels of economic development and suggests that low-income economies can move to middle- and high-income economies by achieving self-sustained economic growth.

economic growth. According to modernization theory, the low-income, less-developed nations can improve their standard of living only with a period of intensive economic growth and accompanying changes in people's beliefs, values, and attitudes toward work. As a result of modernization, the values of people in developing countries supposedly become more similar to those of people in high-income nations. The number of hours that people work at their jobs each week is one measure of the extent to which individuals subscribe to the *work ethic*, a core value widely believed to be of great significance in the modernization process. Of course, this assumption may be false because much research indicates that people in developing nations typically work longer hours per day than individuals in industrialized nations.

Perhaps the best-known modernization theory is that of Walt W. Rostow (1971/1960, 1978), who, as an economic adviser to U.S. President John F. Kennedy, was highly instrumental in shaping U.S. foreign policy toward Latin America in the 1960s. Rostow suggested that all countries go through four stages of economic development, with identical content, regardless of when these nations started the process of industrialization. He compared the stages of economic development to an airplane ride. The first stage is the *traditional stage*, in which very little social change takes place and people do not think much about changing their current circumstances. According to Rostow, societies in this stage are slow to change because the people hold a fatalistic value system, do not subscribe to the work ethic, and save very little money. The second stage is the *take-off stage*—a period of economic growth accompanied by a growing belief in individualism, competition, and achievement. During this stage people start to look toward the future, to save and invest money, and to discard traditional values. According to Rostow's modernization theory, the development of capitalism is essential for the transformation from a traditional, simple society to a modern, complex one. With the financial help and advice of the high-income countries, low-income countries will eventually be able to “fly” and enter the third stage of economic development (■ Figure 8.7). In the third stage the country moves toward *technological maturity*. At this point, the country will improve its technology, reinvest in new industries, and embrace the beliefs, values, and social institutions of the high-income, developed nations. In the fourth

and final stage the country reaches the phase of *high mass consumption* and a correspondingly high standard of living.

Modernization theory has had both its advocates and its critics. According to proponents of this approach, studies have supported the assertion that economic development occurs more rapidly in a capitalist economy. In fact, the countries that have been most successful in moving from low- to middle-income status have typically been those that are most centrally involved in the global capitalist economy. For example, the nations of East Asia have successfully made the transition from low-income to higher-income economies through factors such as a high rate of savings and the fostering of a market economy.

Critics of modernization theory point out that it tends to be Eurocentric in its analysis of low-income countries, which it implicitly labels as backward. In particular, modernization theory does not take into account the possibility that all nations do not industrialize in the same manner. In contrast, some analysts have suggested that modernization of low-income nations today will require novel policies, sequences, and ideologies that are not accounted for by Rostow's approach.

Which sociological perspective is most closely associated with the development approach? Modernization theory is based on a market-oriented perspective, which assumes that “pure” capitalism is good and that the best economic outcomes occur when governments follow the policy of *laissez-faire* (or hands-off) business, giving capitalists the opportunity to make the “best” economic decisions, unfettered by government restraints or cumbersome rules and regulations. In today's global economy, however,



Haider Mohammed Ali/AFP/Getty Images

FIGURE 8.7 Although Iraq is no longer categorized as a low-income country, displaced Iraqis who fled their homeland following an Islamic State (ISIS) offensive must rely on supplies donated by the World Food Programme to provide meals for their families. This example shows how many factors affect economic development.

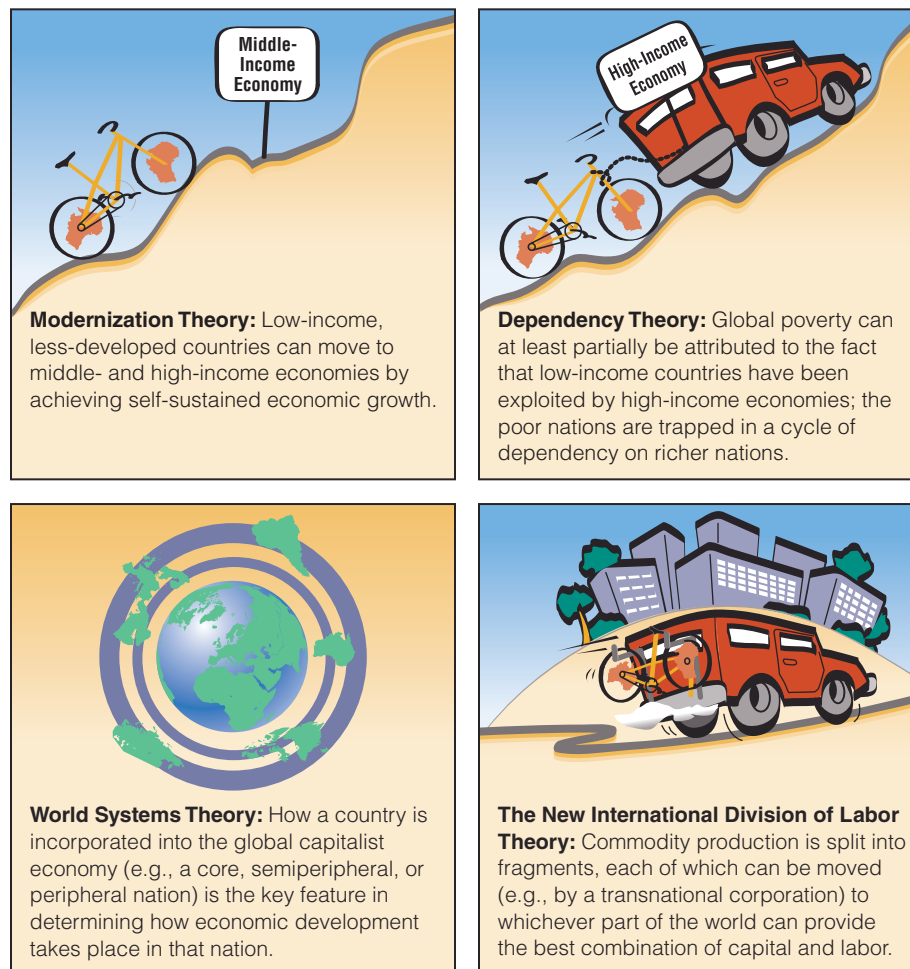


FIGURE 8.8 Approaches to Studying Global Inequality

What causes global inequality? Social scientists have developed a variety of explanations, including the four theories shown here.

many analysts believe that national governments are no longer central corporate decision makers and that transnational corporations determine global economic expansion and contraction. Therefore, corporate decisions to relocate manufacturing processes around the world make the rules and regulations of any one nation irrelevant and national boundaries obsolete. Just as modernization theory most closely approximates a functionalist approach to explaining inequality, dependency theory, world systems theory, and the new international division of labor theory are perspectives rooted in the conflict approach. All four of these approaches are depicted in ■ Figure 8.8.

Dependency Theory

Dependency theory states that global poverty can at least partially be attributed to the fact that the low-income countries have been exploited by the high-income countries. Analyzing events as part of a particular historical process—the expansion of global capitalism—dependency theorists see the greed of the rich countries as a source of increasing

impoverishment of the poorer nations and their people. Dependency theory disputes the notion of the development approach, and modernization theory specifically, that economic growth is the key to meeting important human needs in societies. In contrast, the poorer nations are trapped in a cycle of structural dependency on the richer nations because of their need for infusions of foreign capital and external markets for their raw materials, making it impossible for the poorer nations to pursue their own economic and human development agendas.

Dependency theory has been most often applied to the newly industrializing countries (NICs) of Latin America, whereas scholars examining the NICs of East Asia found that dependency theory had little or no relevance to economic

dependency theory

the belief that global poverty can at least partially be attributed to the fact that the low-income countries have been exploited by the high-income countries.

growth and development in that part of the world. Therefore, dependency theory had to be expanded to encompass transnational economic linkages that affect developing countries, including foreign aid, foreign trade, foreign direct investment, and foreign loans. On the one hand, in Latin America and sub-Saharan Africa, transnational linkages such as foreign aid, investments by transnational corporations, foreign debt, and export trade have been significant impediments to development within a country. On the other hand, East Asian countries such as South Korea and Singapore have historically also had high rates of dependency on foreign aid, foreign trade, and interdependence with transnational corporations but have still experienced high rates of economic growth despite dependency (■ Figure 8.9).

Dependency theory makes a positive contribution to our understanding of global poverty by noting that “underdevelopment” is not necessarily the cause of inequality. Rather, it points out that exploitation not only of one country by another but also of countries by transnational corporations may limit or retard economic growth and human development in some nations.

World Systems Theory

World systems theory is a perspective that examines the role of capitalism, and particularly the transnational division of labor, in a truly global system held together by economic ties. From this approach, global inequality does not emerge solely as a result of the exploitation of one country by another. Instead, economic domination involves a complex world system in which the industrialized, high-income nations benefit from other nations and exploit their citizens. This approach is most closely associated with sociologist Immanuel Wallerstein (1979, 1984, 2011), who believed that a country’s mode of incorporation into the capitalist work economy is the key feature in determining how economic development takes place in that nation.



FIGURE 8.9 A variety of factors—such as foreign investment and globalization—have contributed to the vast economic growth of thriving cities such as Seoul, South Korea.

According to world systems theory, the capitalist world economy is a global system divided into a hierarchy of three major types of nations—core, semiperipheral, and peripheral—in which upward or downward mobility is conditioned by the resources and obstacles that characterize the international system. **Core nations** are dominant capitalist centers characterized by high levels of industrialization and urbanization. Core nations such as the United States, Japan, and Germany possess most of the world’s capital and technology. Even more importantly for their position of domination, they exert massive control over world trade and economic agreements across national boundaries. Some cities in core nations are referred to as *global cities* because they serve as international centers for political, economic, and cultural concerns. New York, Tokyo, and London are the largest global cities, and they are often referred to as the “command posts” of the world economy.

Semiperipheral nations are more developed than peripheral nations but less developed than core nations. Nations in this category typically provide labor and raw materials to core nations within the world system.

These nations constitute a midpoint between the core and peripheral nations that promotes the stability and legitimacy of the three-tiered world economy. These nations include South Korea and Taiwan in East Asia, Mexico and Brazil in Latin America, India in South Asia, and Nigeria and South Africa in Africa. Only two global cities are located in semiperipheral nations: São Paulo, Brazil, which is the center of the Brazilian economy, and Singapore, which is the economic center of a multicountry region in Southeast Asia. According to Wallerstein, semiperipheral nations exploit peripheral nations, just as the core nations exploit both the semiperipheral and the peripheral nations.

Most low-income countries in Africa, South America, and the Caribbean are **peripheral nations**—nations that are dependent on core nations for capital, have little or no industrialization (other than what may be brought in by core

nations), and have uneven patterns of urbanization. According to Wallerstein (1979, 1984, 2011), the wealthy in peripheral nations benefit from the labor of poor workers and from their own economic relations with core-nation capitalists, whom they uphold in order to maintain their own wealth and position. At a global level, uneven economic growth results from capital investment by core nations; disparity between the rich and the poor within the major cities in these nations is increased in the process.

The U.S.–Mexico border is an example of disparity and urban growth: Transnational corporations have built *maquiladora* plants so that goods can be assembled by low-wage workers to keep production costs down. As compared to a federal minimum wage of \$7.25 per hour in the United States (which has been increased as a “state minimum wage” in a few states to as much as \$15 per hour in 2019), the minimum wage in Mexico increased to 102.68 Mexican pesos (about \$5.10 in U.S. dollars based on the 2019 exchange rate). The Border Minimum Wage was also increased to 176.72 pesos (approximately U.S. \$8.79). Many people are paid more than this wage but not often enough for it to be considered a living wage. Some laborers spend as much as 75 hours a week at work trying to provide for themselves and their families. Today, over three thousand *maquiladora* plants located in Mexico employ more than one million people in manufacturing or export assembly plants, producing products and parts for people in the United States and other nations (Thoughtco.com, 2019). ■ Figure 8.10 describes this process.

As Wallerstein’s world systems theory might suggest, one potential threat to the Mexican *maquiladora* plants has been *offshoring*—the movement of work by some transnational corporations to China and to countries in Central America, where wages are lower. However, many high-tech businesses have reversed the trend of offshoring. Instead, these corporations are *nearshoring*—moving their production to nearby countries such as Mexico and Canada where they can take advantage of cost efficiencies associated with lower wages and closer proximity to the United States.

Not all social analysts agree with Wallerstein’s perspective on the hierarchical position of nations in the global economy. However, nations throughout the world are influenced by a relatively small number of cities and transnational corporations that have prompted a shift from an

international to a more global economy. World systems theory must continue to adapt to long-term, large-scale social change that influences global inequality.

The New International Division of Labor Theory

Although the term *world trade* has long implied that there is a division of labor between societies, the nature and extent of this division have recently been reassessed based on the changing nature of the world economy. According to the *new international division of labor theory*, commodity

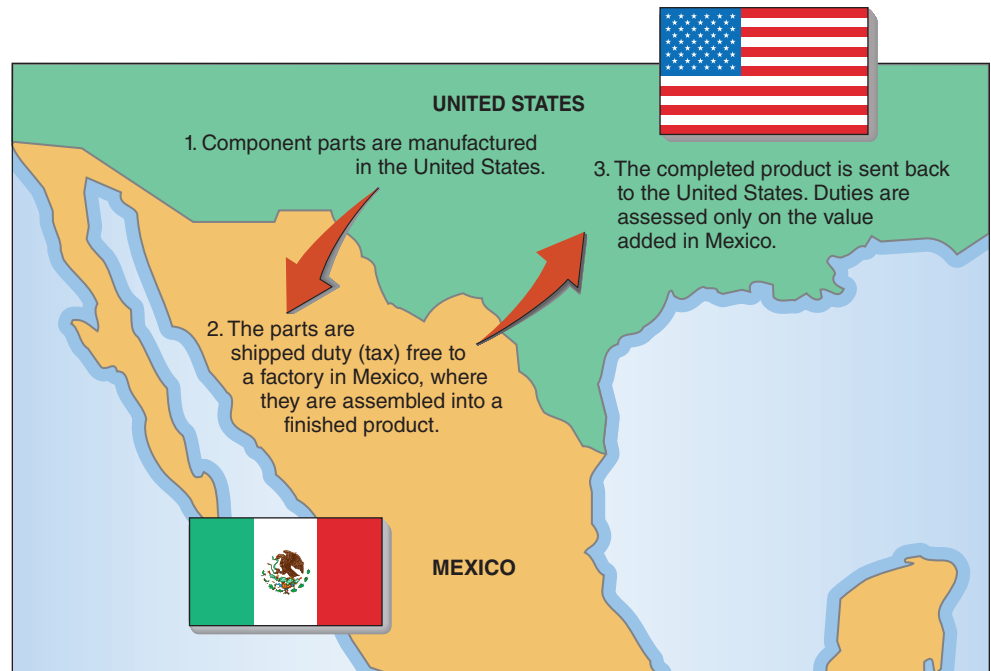


FIGURE 8.10 *Maquiladora Plants*

Here is the process by which transnational corporations establish plants in Mexico so that profits can be increased by using low-wage workers there to assemble products that are then brought into the United States for sale.

world systems theory

a perspective that examines the role of capitalism, and particularly the transnational division of labor, in a truly global system held together by economic ties.

core nations

according to world systems theory, nations that are dominant capitalist centers characterized by high levels of industrialization and urbanization.

semiperipheral nations

according to world systems theory, nations that are more developed than peripheral nations but less developed than core nations.

peripheral nations

according to world systems theory, nations that are dependent on core nations for capital, have little or no industrialization (other than what may be brought in by core nations), and have uneven patterns of urbanization.

new international division of labor theory

the perspective that views commodity production as being split into fragments that can be assigned to whatever part of the world can provide the most profitable combination of capital and labor.

production is being split into fragments that can be assigned to whatever part of the world can provide the most profitable combination of capital and labor. Consequently, the new international division of labor has changed the pattern of geographic specialization between countries, whereby high-income countries have now become dependent on low-income countries for labor. The low-income countries provide transnational corporations with a situation in which they can pay lower wages and taxes and face fewer regulations regarding workplace conditions and environmental protection. Overall, a global manufacturing system that includes the offshoring of jobs has emerged in which transnational corporations establish labor-intensive, assembly-oriented export production, ranging from textiles and clothing to technologically sophisticated exports such as computers, in middle- and lower-income nations.

At the same time, manufacturing technologies are shifting from the large-scale, mass-production assembly lines of the past toward a more flexible production process involving microelectronic technologies. Even service industries—such as processing insurance claim forms, reading MRI and CT scans, and preparing tax forms—that were formerly thought to be less mobile have become exportable through electronic transmission and the Internet. The global nature of these activities has been referred to as *global commodity chains*, a complex pattern of international labor and production processes that results in a finished commodity ready for sale in the marketplace.

Some commodity chains are producer-driven, whereas others are buyer-driven. *Producer-driven commodity chains* is the term used to describe industries in which transnational corporations play a central part in controlling the production process. Industries that produce automobiles, computers, and other capital- and technology-intensive products are typically producer-driven. In contrast, *buyer-driven commodity chains* is the term used to refer to industries in which large retailers (such as Walmart-like corporations), brand-name merchandisers, and trading companies set up decentralized production networks in various middle- and low-income countries. This type of chain is most common in labor-intensive, consumer-goods industries such as toys, garments, and footwear. Athletic footwear companies such as Nike and Reebok are examples of the buyer-driven model. Because these products tend to be labor intensive at the manufacturing stage, the typical factory system is very competitive and globally decentralized. Workers in buyer-driven commodity chains are often exploited by low wages, long hours, and poor working conditions.

Although most discussions of the new international division of labor focus on changes occurring in the lives of people residing in industrialized urban areas of developing nations, it must be remembered that millions of people continue to live in grinding poverty in rural regions of these countries. For many years, sociologists studying poverty have focused on differences in rural and urban poverty throughout the world. Where people live strongly

influences how much money they will make, and income inequalities are important indicators of the life chances of entire families.

Looking Ahead: Global Inequality in the Future

Social inequality is vast both within and among the countries of the world. In 2018, it was estimated that the twenty-six richest individuals in the world control as much wealth as the poorest 50 percent of the world's population (3.8 billion people). No, you did not read that incorrectly: It is twenty-six persons as compared with 3.8 billion. According to a report by Oxfam, the rich continue to grow richer while the poor grow poorer (Elliott, 2019). Even in high-income nations where wealth is highly concentrated, many poor people coexist with the affluent. In middle- and low-income countries, there are small pockets of wealth in the midst of poverty and despair. The Oxfam report concluded the following:

The way our economies are organized means wealth is increasingly and unfairly concentrated among a privileged few while millions of people are barely subsisting. Women are dying for lack of decent maternity care and children are being denied an education that could be their route out of poverty. No one should be condemned to an earlier grave or a life of illiteracy simply because they were born poor (qtd. in Elliott, 2019).

What are the future prospects for greater equality across and within nations? Not all social scientists agree on the answer to this question. Depending on the theoretical framework that they apply in studying global inequality, social analysts may describe either an optimistic or a pessimistic scenario for the future. Moreover, some analysts highlight the human-rights issues embedded in global inequality, whereas others focus primarily on an economic framework.

In some regions, high rates of unemployment and persistent poverty undermine human development and future possibilities for socioeconomic change. In the 2020s, unemployment rates in the United States and the Euro zone (nations in the European Union such as Italy, France, and Germany) continue to threaten global economic growth and limit opportunities for unemployed and underemployed workers and young people seeking to get into the labor market. Many young people are unemployed, and a large number of these are destined to experience long-term unemployment. Problems such as long-term unemployment contribute to gross inequality, which has high financial and quality-of-life costs to people, even for those who are not the poorest of the poor. In the future, continued population growth, urbanization, environmental degradation, and violent conflict threaten even the meager living conditions of those residing in low-income nations. However, from this approach the future looks dim not only for people

YOU CAN **Make a Difference**

Global Networking to Reduce World Hunger and Poverty

When many of us think about problems such as world poverty, we tend to see ourselves as powerless to bring about change in so vast an issue. However, a recurring message from social activists and religious leaders is that each person can contribute something to the betterment of other people and sometimes the entire world.

An initial way for each of us to be involved is to become more informed about global issues and to learn how we can contribute time and resources to organizations seeking to address social issues such as illiteracy and hunger. We can also find out about meetings and activities of organizations and participate in online discussion forums where we can express our opinions, ask questions, share information, and interact with other people interested in topics such as international relief and development. It may not feel like you are doing much to address global problems; however, information and education are the first steps in promoting greater understanding of social problems and of the world's people. Likewise, it is important to help our own nation's children understand that they can make a difference in ending hunger in the United States and other nations.

Would you like to function as a catalyst for change? You can learn how to proceed by gathering information from organizations that seek to reduce problems such as poverty and to provide forums for interacting with other people. Here are a few starting points for your search:

- CARE International is a confederation of fourteen global national members in North America, Europe, Japan, and Australia. CARE assists the world's poor in their efforts to achieve social and economic well-being. Programs include emergency relief, education,

health and population, children's health, reproductive health, water and sanitation, small economic activity development, agriculture, community development, and environment.

Other organizations fighting world hunger and health problems include the following; check out their websites:

- WhyHunger
- "Kids Can Make a Difference," an innovative program developed by the International Education and Resource Network
- World Health Organization



United Nations Relief and Works Agency volunteers provide people with food supplied by the European Union and the World Food Programme. What other goods and services might volunteers be able to provide around the world?

in low-income and middle-income countries but also for those in high-income countries, who will see their quality of life diminish as natural resources are depleted, the environment is further polluted, and global political unrest threaten the standard of living that many people have come to enjoy. According to some social analysts, transnational corporations and financial institutions such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund will further solidify and control a globalized economy, which will transfer the power to make significant choices to these organizations and away from the people and their governments. Further loss of resources and means of livelihood will affect people and countries around the globe.

As a result of global corporate domination, there could be a leveling-out of average income around the world, with wages falling in high-income countries and wages increasing significantly in low- and middle-income countries. If this pessimistic

scenario occurs, there is likely to be greater polarization of the rich and the poor and more potential for ethnic and national conflicts over such issues as worsening environmental degradation and who has the right to natural resources.

On the other hand, a more optimistic scenario is also possible. With modern technology and worldwide economic growth, it might be possible to reduce absolute poverty and to increase people's opportunities. Trends that have the potential to bring about more sustainable patterns of development are the socioeconomic progress made in many low- and middle-income countries over the past forty years as technological, social, and environmental improvements have occurred. For example, technological innovation continues to improve living standards for some people. Fertility rates are declining in some regions but remain high in others, where there remains grave cause for concern about the availability of adequate natural resources for the future.

Finally, health and education may continue to improve in lower-income countries. Healthy, educated populations are crucial for the future in order to reduce global poverty. The education of women is of primary importance in the future if global inequality is to be reduced. All aspects of schooling and training are crucial for the future, including agricultural extension services in rural areas to help women farmers produce more crops to feed their families. From this viewpoint, we can enjoy prosperity only by ensuring that other people have the opportunity to survive and thrive in their own surroundings (see the “You Can Make a Difference” box). The problems associated with global poverty are

therefore of interest to a wide-ranging set of countries and people. For example, Oxfam offers the following possibility:

There is enough wealth in the world to provide everyone with a fair chance in life. Governments should act to ensure that taxes raised from wealth and businesses paying their fair share are used to fund free, good-quality services that can save and transform people's lives. (qtd. in Elliott, 2019)

This suggestion gives us something to think about. What ideas do you have for reducing global inequality and persistent poverty?

Q&A Chapter Review

Use these questions and answers to check how well you've achieved the learning objectives set out at the beginning of this chapter.

LO1 How do wealth and poverty contribute to global stratification?

Wealth and poverty are critical components in global stratification. The term *global stratification* refers to the unequal distribution of wealth, power, and prestige on a global basis. These inequalities result in people having vastly different lifestyles and life chances both within and among the nations of the world. Today, the income gap between the richest and the poorest segments of the world population continues to widen, and within some nations the poorest one-fifth of the population has an income that is only a slight fraction of the overall average per capita income for that country.

LO2 What is the levels of development approach for studying global inequality?

One of the primary problems encountered by social scientists studying global stratification and social and economic inequality is what terminology should be used to refer to the distribution of resources in various nations. Most definitions of inequality are based on comparisons of levels of income or economic development, whereby countries are identified in terms of the “three worlds” or upon their levels of economic development. Terminology based on levels of development includes concepts such as developed nations, developing nations, less-developed nations, and underdevelopment.

LO3 How does the World Bank classify nations into four economic categories?

The World Bank classifies nations into four economic categories and establishes the upper and lower limits for

the gross national income (GNI) in each category. Low-income economies had a GNI per capita of less than \$1,045 in 2015, lower-middle-income economies had a GNI per capita between \$1,046 and \$4,125, upper-middle-income economies had a GNI per capita between \$4,126 and \$12,735, and high-income economies had a GNI per capita of \$12,736 or more. Defining poverty is more than just personal and household income; it also involves social judgments made by researchers. Absolute poverty is a condition in which people do not have the means to secure the most basic necessities of life. It is measured by comparing personal or household income or expenses with the cost of buying a given quantity of goods and services. Relative poverty exists when people may be able to afford basic necessities but are still unable to maintain an average standard of living. This is measured by comparing one person's income with the incomes of others.

LO4 What concepts are associated with measurement of global wealth and poverty?

Income disparities are not the only factor that defines poverty and its effect on people. Defining poverty also includes social judgments and comparisons between such factors as absolute poverty, relative poverty, and subjective poverty. Absolute poverty refers to people who do not have the means to secure the most basic necessities of life. Relative poverty is a measure that compares one person's income with the income of others. Subjective poverty is measured by comparing a person's actual income against his or her expectations and perceptions. Some analysts use the Gini coefficient to measure income inequality. This helps them to determine the degree of inequality in the distribution of family income in a country.

LO5 Why is human development a key factor in fighting global poverty?

The United Nations' Human Development Index helps us monitor the progress of nations in regard to life expectancy, educational attainment, and other factors related to length and quality of life. This index helps research to fight poverty by highlighting areas of development in a country that need improvement, such as increasing life expectancy, reducing infant mortality and the proportion of underweight children under age five, and increasing the adult literacy rate for low-income, middle-income, and high-income countries.

LO6 What is the modernization theory of global inequality? What are the four stages of economic development identified by Rostow?

Modernization theory is a perspective that links global inequality to different levels of economic development and suggests that low-income economies can move to middle- and high-income economies by achieving self-sustained economic growth. Rostow suggested that all countries go through four stages of economic development, with identical content, regardless of when these nations started the process of industrialization. The stages of economic development are the traditional stage, in which very little social change takes place and people do not think much about changing their current circumstances. The second stage is the take-off stage—a period of economic growth accompanied by a growing belief in individualism, competition, and achievement. In the third stage, the country moves toward technological maturity. In the fourth and final stage, the country reaches the phase of high mass consumption and a correspondingly high standard of living.

LO7 What is dependency theory?

Dependency theory states that global poverty can at least partially be attributed to the fact that the low-income countries have been exploited by the high-income countries. Whereas modernization theory focuses on how societies can reduce inequality through industrialization and economic development, dependency theorists see the greed of the rich countries as a source of increasing impoverishment of the poorer nations and their people.

LO8 What is world systems theory in the context of global inequality?

According to world systems theory, the capitalist world economy is a global system divided into a hierarchy of three major types of nations: Core nations are dominant capitalist centers characterized by high levels of industrialization and urbanization, semiperipheral nations are more developed than peripheral nations but less developed than core nations, and peripheral nations are those countries that are dependent on core nations for capital, have little or no industrialization (other than what may be brought in by core nations), and have uneven patterns of urbanization.

LO9 What is the new international division of labor theory?

The new international division of labor theory is based on the assumption that commodity production is split into fragments that can be assigned to whichever part of the world can provide the most profitable combination of capital and labor. This division of labor has changed the pattern of geographic specialization between countries, whereby high-income countries have become dependent on low-income countries for labor. The low-income countries provide transnational corporations with a situation in which they can pay lower wages and taxes and face fewer regulations regarding workplace conditions and environmental protection.

LO10 What are contemporary and future prospects regarding global inequality?

Both positive and negative scenarios might be used to answer this question. From a negative outlook, global inequality will continue to increase as long as there are high rates of unemployment and persistent poverty that undermine human development and possibilities for improved socioeconomic conditions around the world. From a positive outlook, modern technology and worldwide economic growth may reduce absolute inequality and increase people's opportunities. Improved standards of living, better access to health facilities, and enhanced educational opportunities, especially for women, are key factors for reducing global inequality in the future.

Analysts have suggested that governments also must play a crucial part in reducing inequality by investing in public services, making the very wealthy pay their fair share through taxation and other means, and making every effort to provide everyone a fair chance in life.

Key Terms

core nations 234

dependency theory 233

global stratification 221

modernization theory 231

new international division of labor
theory 235

peripheral nations 234

semiperipheral nations 234

world systems theory 234

Questions for Critical Thinking

- 1 You have decided to study global wealth and poverty. How would you approach your study? What research methods would provide the best data for analysis? What might you find if you compared your research data with popular presentations—such as film and advertising—of everyday life in low- and middle-income countries?
- 2 How would you compare the lives of poor people living in the low-income nations of the world with those in central cities and rural areas of the United States? In what ways are their lives similar? In what ways are they different?
- 3 Should U.S. foreign policy include provisions for reducing poverty in other nations of the world? Should U.S. domestic policy include provisions for reducing poverty in the United States? How are these issues similar? How are they different?
- 4 Using the theories discussed in this chapter, devise a plan to alleviate global poverty. Assume that you have the necessary wealth, political power, and other resources necessary to reduce the problem. Share your plan with others in your class and create a consolidated plan that represents the best ideas and suggestions presented.

Answers to **Sociology Quiz**

Global Wealth and Poverty

1	False	In the twenty-first century, the income gap between the richest and poorest has increased on a global basis as well as in the United States.
2	False	The wealth of the world's twenty-six richest people is more than the combined wealth of 50 percent of the world's population (3.8 billion people).
3	True	The World Bank estimates that nearly 736 million people live below the international poverty line, which is defined as earning less than \$1.90 each day.
4	False	One of the consequences of extreme poverty is hunger, and millions of people die of hunger-related diseases or chronic malnutrition each year.
5	True	In almost all low-income countries (as well as middle- and high-income countries), poverty is a more chronic problem for women because of sexual discrimination, resulting in a lack of educational and employment opportunities.
6	False	Although the number of poor people residing in urban areas is growing rapidly, the majority of people with incomes below the poverty line are in rural areas of the world.
7	False	More than two-thirds of adults worldwide who are unable to read and write are women.
8	True	Although these fuels are inefficient and harmful to health, many low-income people cannot afford appliances, connection charges, and so forth. In some areas, electricity is not available.





Race and Ethnicity

9

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- 1 Discuss** race and ethnicity and their significance in society.
- 2 Discuss the changing** racial and ethnic classifications in the United States.
- 3 Discuss** the concepts of prejudice, stereotypes, racism, and discrimination.
- 4 Discuss** four major sociological perspectives on racial and ethnic relations.
- 5 Describe** the experiences of Native Americans, Alaska Natives, and white Anglo-Saxon Protestants (WASPs) in the United States from historical and contemporary perspectives.
- 6 Describe** the experiences of African Americans and white ethnic Americans in the United States from historical and contemporary perspectives.
- 7 Describe** the major categories of Asian Americans in the United States and their historical and contemporary experiences in the country.
- 8 Describe** the major categories of Latinx (Hispanic Americans) and Middle Eastern Americans in the United States and their historical and contemporary experiences in the country.
- 9 Discuss** the prevalence and the future of racial and ethnic inequality worldwide and in the United States.

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SOCIOLOGY & **Everyday Life**

Race and Moral Imagination: From Selma to Ferguson and to Today

[T]here are places and moments in America where this nation's destiny has been decided. . . . Selma is such a place. . . . What they did here will reverberate through the ages. Not because the change they won was preordained, not because their victory was complete, but because they proved that nonviolent change is possible; that love and hope can conquer hate. . . .

We know the march is not yet over. . . . There's nothing America can't handle if we actually look squarely at the problem. And this is work for all Americans, not just some. Not just whites. Not just blacks. If we want to honor the courage of those who marched [in Selma] that day, then all of us are called to possess their moral imagination. All of us need to feel as they did the fierce urgency of now. . . . And that's what the young people . . . must take away from this day. You are America. . . . For everywhere in this country, there are first steps to be taken, there's new ground to cover, there are more bridges to be crossed. And it is you, the young and fearless at heart, the most diverse and educated generation in our history, who the nation is waiting to follow. . . .



AP Images/Jacquelyn Martin

Racial inequality has been a pressing social issue throughout United States history. In 1965, Amelia Boynton Robinson (shown here seated) marched across the Edmund Pettus Bridge with other civil rights activists to go from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama, to protest racial injustice and call for nonviolent change. On the fiftieth anniversary of this event in 2015, Ms. Robinson joined then- President Barack Obama and other grassroots activists to reenact this important event and raise social awareness that much remains to be done to promote racial equality and social justice.

Have you seen the film *Selma*? This movie depicts the 1965 conflict that ensued in Selma, Alabama, when 600 demonstrators embarked on a fifty-mile march to Montgomery, the state capital, to demand the right to vote. However, as the civil rights protesters crossed the bridge out of town, they were confronted by state troopers who beat them with clubs and fired tear gas in an effort to disperse them. The fiftieth anniversary of this historic event, at which then-President Barack Obama spoke, coincided with the release of a 2015 U.S. Justice Department report on the death of Michael Brown, an unarmed eighteen-year-old black man fatally shot by a white police officer in Ferguson, Missouri. Brown's death resulted in nationwide protests and chants of "Hands up, don't shoot!" The "Black Lives Matter" social movement also had its roots in this and other shootings of unarmed African American men predominantly by white male police officers.

Was racism involved? Was this an isolated situation or a common occurrence? In the Justice Department report on the Ferguson killing, public officials and law enforcement officers were found to have routinely demonstrated explicit racism, discrimination, and abuse toward persons of color in that community. When the report was released, many concerned citizens, civil-rights leaders, and journalists emphatically stated that Ferguson was not an isolated case. They pointed out many

other occurrences that demonstrated that Ferguson was just the tip of the iceberg: Racial injustice and police brutality directed toward African Americans and other persons of color are nationwide problems (Robertson, Dewan, and Apuzzo, 2015). For example, a year-long study by the *Washington Post* that attempted to document every shooting death at the hands of police in 2015 concluded that the vast majority of individuals who were shot and killed by police in that year were armed and that half of them were white; however, police killed African Americans at three times the rate of white Americans when adjusted for the populations where these shootings occurred (Somashekhar and Rich, 2016). A study conducted in 2019 by sociologist Frank Edwards found that about 1 in 1,000 African American men and boys in the United States will die at the hands of police. Consider the fact that an African American male has better odds of being killed by law enforcement officials than of winning many scratch-off lottery games. This risk is about 2.5 times higher for black men and boys than for white male peers (Khan, 2019). The persistence of racism and police discrimination against persons of color is not only an individual issue but also a structural problem deeply embedded in U.S. history and contemporary social life.

In this chapter we examine prejudice, discrimination, sociological perspectives on race and ethnicity, and commonalities and differences in the experiences of racial and ethnic groups in the United States. In

—In then-President Barack Obama's speech honoring the fiftieth anniversary of the civil rights march from Selma to Birmingham, the president highlighted the role that he

believed everyone must play in bringing about greater racial justice

How Much Do You Know About Race, Ethnicity, and Sports?

TRUE	FALSE	
T	F	1 Some deeply held ideas about race and racial differences are often expressed in our beliefs about sports and athletic ability.
T	F	2 Most elite sprinters are of West African descent because they possess a greater percentage of fast-twitch muscles that can be attributed to a specific racial gene.
T	F	3 The chances (statistical odds) of becoming a professional athlete are better than the chance of getting struck by lightning or writing a <i>New York Times</i> best-seller.
T	F	4 In the twenty-first century the number of African Americans in head coaching positions in the 130 colleges and universities that make up the Football Bowl Subdivision (FBS), formerly known as NCAA Division I-A, has increased significantly.
T	F	5 Today, all presidents of the FBS colleges and universities are white.
T	F	6 African Americans account for more than half of all FBS football student-athletes.
T	F	7 All of the conference commissioners of the FBS are white men.
T	F	8 Visible racial-ethnic diversity on college sports teams has little effect on how younger athletes perceive their future educational and sporting opportunities in college and beyond.

Answers can be found at the end of the chapter.

the process we examine how people, past and present, have been singled out for negative treatment on the basis of their perceived race or ethnicity. We also show how they have sought to overcome prejudice and discrimination through endeavors such as sports, where both problems and progress in racial and ethnic relations are evident. Before reading on, test your knowledge about race, ethnicity, and sports by taking the “Sociology and Everyday Life” quiz. ●

Race and Ethnicity

What is race? Some people think it refers to skin color (the Caucasian “race”); others use it to refer to a religion (the Jewish “race”), nationality (the British “race”), or the entire human species (the human “race”). Popular usages of the word have been based on the assumption that a race is a grouping or classification based on *genetic* variations in physical appearance, particularly skin color. However, social scientists, biologists, and genetic anthropologists dispute the idea that biological race is a meaningful concept. Researchers with the Human Genome Project, which was commissioned to map all of the genes on the twenty-three pairs of human chromosomes and to sequence the

3.1 billion DNA base pairs that make up the chromosomes, made this statement about genes and race:

DNA studies do not indicate that separate classifiable subspecies (races) exist within modern humans. While different genes for physical traits such as skin and hair color can be identified between individuals, no consistent patterns of genes across the human genome exist to distinguish one race from another. There also is no genetic basis for divisions of human ethnicity. People who have lived in the same geographic region for many generations may have some alleles in common [an allele is one member of a pair or series of genes that occupy a specific position on a specific chromosome], but no allele will be found in all members of one population and in no members of any other. (genomics.energy.gov, 2007)

The idea of race has little meaning in a biological sense because of the enormous amount of interbreeding that has taken place within the human population. For these reasons, sociologists sometimes place “race” in quotation marks to show that categorizing individuals and population groups on biological characteristics is neither accurate nor

based on valid distinctions between the genetic makeup of differently identified “races.”

Today, sociologists emphasize that race is a *socially constructed reality*, not a biological one. Race as a *social construct* means that races as such do not actually exist but that some groups are still racially defined because the *idea* persists in many people’s minds that races are distinct biological categories with physically distinguishable characteristics and a shared common cultural heritage. The process of creating a socially constructed reality involves three key activities: collective agreement, imposition, and acceptance of a specific construction (Lusca, 2008).

Collective agreement means that people jointly agree on the idea of race and that they accept that it exists as an important component in how we describe or explain the individual’s experiences in everyday life. Examples of collective agreement include a widely held acceptance of the view that “racial differences affect people’s athletic ability” or of the assumption that “physical differences based on race cause cultural differences among various distinct categories of people.”

Imposition refers to the fact that throughout much of human history, the notion of race has been defined by members of dominant groups who have the power to establish a system that hierarchically organizes racial categories (as superior or inferior, for example) to establish and maintain permanent status differentials among individuals and groups. These differences are demonstrated by the level of access that dominant- and subordinate-group members have to necessary and desired goods and services, such as education, housing, employment, health care, and legal services.

Finally, *acceptance of a specific construction* means that ideas pertaining to race become so widely accepted that they become embedded in law and social customs in a society and become much more difficult to change or eliminate. When a significant *number* of people, or a number of *significant* people, accept a social construction as absolute and real, the prevailing group typically imposes its beliefs and practices upon others through tradition and law. Over time, ideas about race, inadequate or false though they may be, are passed on from generation to generation.

In sum, the social significance that people accord to race is more important than any biological differences that might exist among people who are placed in arbitrary categories. Although race does not exist in an objective way, it does have *real* consequences and effects in the social world.

Comparing Race and Ethnicity

A *race* is a category of people who have been singled out as inferior or superior, often on the basis of real or alleged physical characteristics

such as skin color, hair texture, eye shape, or other subjectively selected attributes (Feagin and Feagin, 2012). Racial categories currently identified by the U.S. Census Bureau include White; Black or African American; Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin; Asian; American Indian or Alaska Native; Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander; and some other race or origin.

As compared with race, *ethnicity* refers to one’s cultural background or national origin. An *ethnic group* is a collection of people distinguished, by others or by themselves, primarily on the basis of cultural or nationality characteristics (Feagin and Feagin, 2012) (■ Figure 9.1). Ethnic groups share five main characteristics: (1) *unique cultural traits*, such as language, clothing, holidays, and/or religious practices; (2) *a sense of community*; (3) *a feeling of ethnocentrism*; (4) *ascribed membership from birth*; and (5) *territoriality*, or the tendency to occupy a distinct geographic area (such as Little Italy or Little Moscow) by choice and/or for self-protection. Examples of ethnic groups include Jewish Americans, Irish Americans, Italian Americans, and Russian Americans. Many people mistakenly believe that the classification Hispanic or Latinx is a “race.” According to the U.S. Census Bureau, Hispanic or Latinx is an ethnicity that refers to a person of Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, South or Central American, or other Spanish culture or origin (Ennis, Rios-Vargas, and Albert, 2011). Persons who are Hispanic or Latinx can be of any race.

Although some people do not identify with any ethnic group, others participate in social interaction with individuals in their ethnic group and feel a sense of common identity based on cultural characteristics such as language, religion, or politics. However, ethnic groups are not only influenced by their own history but also by patterns



Steven Wiedoff/Alamy Stock Photo

FIGURE 9.1 New York City’s Chinatown is an ethnic enclave where people participate in social interaction with other individuals in their ethnic group and feel a sense of shared identity. Ethnic enclaves provide economic and psychological support for recent immigrants as well as for those who were born in the United States.

of ethnic domination and subordination in societies. It is important to note that terminology pertaining to racial-ethnic groups is continually in flux and that people within the category as well as outsiders often contest certain terminology. Examples include the use of *African American* as compared to *black*, *Hispanic* as compared to *Latinx*, and *American Indian* as compared to *Native American*.

The Social Significance of Race and Ethnicity

Race and ethnicity take on great social significance because how people act in regard to these terms drastically affects other people's lives, including what opportunities they have, how they are treated, and even how long they live. According to the now-classic works on the effects of race by sociologists Michael Omi and Howard Winant (1994: 158), race “permeates every institution, every relationship, and every individual” in the United States:

As we . . . compare real estate prices in different neighborhoods, select a radio channel to enjoy while we drive to work, size up a potential client, customer, neighbor, or teacher, stand in line at the unemployment office, or carry out a thousand other normal tasks, we are compelled to think racially, to use the racial categories and meaning systems into which we have been socialized.

Historically, stratification based on race and ethnicity has pervaded all aspects of political, economic, and social life. Consider sports as an example. Throughout the early history of the game of baseball, many African Americans had outstanding skills as players but were categorically excluded from Major League teams because of their skin color. Even in 1947, after Jackie Robinson broke the “color line” to become the first African American in the Major Leagues, his experience was marred by racial slurs, hate letters, death threats against his infant son, and assaults on his wife (Ashe, 1988; Peterson, 1992/1970). With some professional athletes from diverse racial-ethnic categories having multimillion-dollar contracts and lucrative endorsement deals, it is easy to assume that racism in sports—as well as in the larger society—is a thing of the past. However, this *commercialization* of sports does not mean that racial prejudice and discrimination no longer exist (Coakley, 2009).

Racial Classifications and the Meaning of Race

If we examine racial classifications throughout history, we find that in ancient Greece and Rome, a person's race was the group to which she or he belonged, associated with an ancestral place and culture. From the Middle Ages until about the eighteenth century, a person's race was based on family and ancestral ties, in the sense of a *line*, or ties to a national group. During the eighteenth

century, physical differences such as the darker skin hues of Africans became associated with race, but racial divisions were typically based on differences in religion and cultural tradition rather than on human biology. With the intense (though misguided) efforts that surrounded the attempt to justify black slavery and white dominance in all areas of life during the second half of the nineteenth century, *races* came to be defined as distinct biological categories of people who were not all members of the same family but who shared inherited physical and cultural traits that were alleged to be different from those traits shared by people in other races. Hierarchies of races were established, placing the “white race” at the top, the “black race” at the bottom, and others in between.

However, racial classifications in the United States have changed over the past century. If we look at U.S. Census Bureau classifications, for example, we can see how the meaning of race continues to change. First, race is defined by perceived skin color: white or nonwhite. Whereas one category exists for “whites” (who vary considerably in actual skin color and physical appearance), all of the remaining categories are considered “nonwhite.”

Second, categories of official racial classifications may (over time) create a sense of group membership or “consciousness of kind” for people within a somewhat arbitrary classification. When people of European descent were classified as “white,” some began to see themselves as different from “nonwhite.” Consequently, Jewish, Italian, and Irish immigrants may have felt more a part of the northern European white mainstream in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Whether Chinese Americans, Japanese Americans, Korean Americans, and Filipino Americans come to think of themselves collectively as “Asian Americans” seems somewhat doubtful except in the case of educational or governmental paperwork that offers “Asian American” as the only option in this category.

Third, racial purity is assumed to exist. Prior to the 2000 census, for example, the true diversity of the U.S. population was not revealed in census data because multiracial individuals were forced to either select a single race as being their “race” or select the vague category of “other.” Census 2000 made it possible—for the first time—for individuals to classify themselves as being of more than one race. In the 2010 census, nine million people in the United States—about 3 percent of the total population—identified themselves as multiracial (Humes, Jones, and Ramirez, 2011). Between 2000 and 2010, the percentage of Americans identifying as more

race

a category of people who have been singled out as inferior or superior, often on the basis of real or alleged physical characteristics such as skin color, hair texture, eye shape, or other subjectively selected attributes.

ethnic group

a collection of people distinguished, by others or by themselves, primarily on the basis of cultural or nationality characteristics.

than one race increased by 32 percent. Among U.S. children, the mixed-race population increased by nearly 50 percent, making mixed-race children the fastest-growing youth group in the United States. With one in seven new marriages in the United States involving spouses of different races or ethnicities, the multiracial population is likely to continue to increase (Passel, Wang, and Taylor, 2010). It will be interesting to see how people identify themselves in the 2020 census as our nation grows more diverse and more complex.

As noted earlier, the way that people are classified remains important because such classifications affect their access to employment, education, housing, social services, federal aid, and other public and private goods and services that might be available to them.

Dominant and Subordinate Groups

The terms *majority group* and *minority group* are widely used, but their meanings are less clear as the composition of the U.S. population continues to change. Accordingly, many sociologists prefer the terms *dominant* and *subordinate* to identify power relationships that are based on perceived racial, ethnic, or other attributes and identities. To sociologists, a **dominant group** is a racial or ethnic group that has the greatest power and resources in a society (Feagin and Feagin, 2012). In the United States, whites with northern European ancestry (often referred to as European Americans, white Anglo-Saxon Protestants, or WASPs) have been considered to be the dominant group for many years. A **subordinate group** is one whose members, because of physical or cultural characteristics, are disadvantaged and subjected to unequal treatment and discrimination by the dominant group. Historically, African Americans and other persons of color have been considered to be subordinate-group members, particularly when they are from lower-income categories.

It is important to note that, in the sociological sense, the word *group* as used in these two terms is misleading because people who merely share ascribed racial or ethnic characteristics do not constitute a group. However, the terms *dominant group* and *subordinate group* do give us a way to describe relationships of advantage/disadvantage and power/exploitation that exist in contemporary nations.

Prejudice

Although there are various meanings of the word part *dice*, sociologists define **prejudice** as a negative attitude based on faulty generalizations about members of specific racial, ethnic, or other groups. The term *prejudice* is from the Latin words *prae* (“before”) and *judicium* (“judgment”), which means that people may be biased either for or against members of other groups even before they have had any contact with them. Although prejudice can be either *positive* (bias in favor of a group—often our own) or *negative* (bias against

a group—one we deem less worthy than our own), it most often refers to the negative attitudes that people may have about members of other racial or ethnic groups (■Figure 9.2).

Stereotypes

Prejudice is rooted in ethnocentrism and stereotypes. When used in the context of racial and ethnic relations, *ethnocentrism* refers to the tendency to regard one’s own culture and group as the standard—and thus superior—whereas all other groups are seen as inferior. Ethnocentrism is maintained and perpetuated by **stereotypes**—overgeneralizations about the appearance, behavior, or other characteristics of members of particular categories.

Although stereotypes can be either positive or negative, examples of negative stereotyping abound in sports. Think about the Native American names, images, and mascots used by sports teams such as the Atlanta Braves, Cleveland Indians, and Washington Redskins. Members of Native American groups have been actively working to eliminate the use of stereotypic mascots (with feathers, buckskins, beads, spears, and “warpaint”), “Indian chants,” and gestures (such as the “tomahawk chop”), which they claim trivialize and exploit Native American culture. According to sociologist Jay Coakley (2009), the use of stereotypes and words such as *redskin* symbolizes a lack of understanding of the culture and heritage of native peoples and is offensive to many Native Americans. Although some people see these names and activities as “innocent fun,” others view them as a form of racism.

Racism

What is racism? **Racism** is a set of attitudes, beliefs, and practices that is used to justify the superior treatment of one racial or ethnic group and the inferior treatment of another racial or ethnic group. The world has seen a long history of racism: It can be traced from the earliest civilizations. At various times throughout U.S. history, various categories of people, including Irish Americans, Italian Americans, Jewish Americans, African Americans, and Latinx, have been the objects of racist ideology.

Racism may be overt or subtle. *Overt racism* is more blatant and may take the form of public statements about the “inferiority” of members of a racial or ethnic group. Examples of overt racism in college sports would be the fans of one college sport’s team ridiculing members of another school’s team by making monkey noises or smashing a watermelon in the stands at a football game when one high school played a predominately black team (Lapchick, 2019b). These actions are blatant and highly visible, but many subtle forms of racism also exist.

Subtle racism is hidden from sight and more difficult to recognize. Examples of subtle racism in sports include descriptions of African American athletes that suggest that they have “natural” athletic abilities and are better suited for those team positions that require speed and agility rather than the ability to think or process information quickly. By



AP Images

FIGURE 9.2 Contemporary prejudice and discrimination cannot be understood without taking into account the historical background. School integration in the 1950s was accomplished despite white resistance. Today, integration in education, housing, and many other areas of social life remains a pressing social issue.

contrast, white athletes are depicted as being more intelligent and dependable and possessing the right leadership and decision-making skills needed in positions with higher levels of responsibility and control. However, some situations that obviously might be considered to be “racism” are believed by others to be protected by the First Amendment’s guarantee of freedom of speech, creating a quandary for those seeking to reduce or end racism and discrimination (see this chapter’s “Sociology and Social Policy” box).

Theories of Prejudice

Are some people more prejudiced than others? To answer this question, some theories focus on how individuals may transfer their internal psychological problem onto an external object or person. Others look at factors such as social learning and personality types.

dominant group

a racial or ethnic group that has the greatest power and resources in a society.

subordinate group

a group whose members, because of physical or cultural characteristics, are disadvantaged and subjected to unequal treatment and discrimination by the dominant group.

prejudice

a negative attitude based on faulty generalizations about members of specific racial, ethnic, or other groups.

stereotypes

overgeneralizations about the appearance, behavior, or other characteristics of members of particular categories.

racism

a set of attitudes, beliefs, and practices that is used to justify the superior treatment of one racial or ethnic group and the inferior treatment of another racial or ethnic group.

Racist Incidents on College Campuses versus the First Amendment Right to Freedom of Speech

Routinely across the United States, newspaper, television, and social media reports inform the public of incidents such as these that are happening on college and university campuses throughout the country:

- Racist graffiti, including graffiti of swastikas, scrawled on the walls of college dorms and classroom buildings
- Speeches filled with racial or religious hatred given by white supremacists who have either been invited to campus to speak or come of their own accord
- Fraternity members who allegedly perpetrate racist speech and activities and blame it on “tradition”

All of these forms of racist speech and anti-Semitic behavior have been reported in recent years throughout the United States. What is “hate speech” anyway? The term refers to speech that offends, threatens, or insults groups, based on race, color, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, disability, or other traits. Hate speech is often directed at historically oppressed racial or religious minorities, or persons in other subordinate-power groups, with the intent to insult and demean them.

In our government and political science courses, most of us learned that the First Amendment to the United States Constitution protects the right to speech even when others disagree with the speech or find it contemptible. The First Amendment, in part, states, “Congress shall make no law . . . abridging the freedom of speech . . .” And public colleges

and universities are not exempt from this provision. U.S. Supreme Court decisions, such as *Healy v. James* (1972), have reaffirmed that free speech rights extend to college campuses because they are not “enclaves immune from the sweep of the First Amendment.”

Although racist speech is constitutionally protected, many institutions of higher education have established speech codes to ban offensive expression on campus, to specify what speech and behaviors are prohibited, and to foster a productive learning environment for all students.



Mario Tama/Getty Images

Like all other areas of social life, college campuses are not immune to racist hate speech and blatant acts of racism that target persons of color. Shown here, protesting students chant “No Diversity, No University” after a noose was found hanging on an African American professor’s door at Columbia University’s Teachers College in New York City. Does such a situation reflect a climate of racism in our society? Why or why not?

The *frustration–aggression hypothesis* states that people who are frustrated in their efforts to achieve a highly desired goal will respond with a pattern of aggression toward others (Dollard et al., 1939). The object of their aggression becomes the *scapegoat*—a person or group that is incapable of offering resistance to the hostility or aggression of others. Scapegoats are often used as substitutes for the actual source of the frustration. For example, members of subordinate racial and ethnic groups are often blamed for local problems (such as the home team losing a football, basketball, or soccer game) or societal problems (such as large-scale unemployment or an economic recession) over which they believe they have little or no control (■ Figure 9.3).

According to some symbolic interactionists, prejudice results from social learning; in other words, it is learned from observing and imitating significant others, such as

parents and peers. Initially, children do not have a frame of reference from which to question the prejudices of their relatives and friends. When they are rewarded with smiles or laughs for telling derogatory jokes or making negative comments about outgroup members, children’s prejudiced attitudes may be reinforced.

Psychologist Theodor W. Adorno and his colleagues (1950) concluded that highly prejudiced individuals tend to have an *authoritarian personality*, which is characterized by excessive conformity, submissiveness to authority, intolerance, insecurity, a high level of superstition, and rigid, stereotypic thinking. This type of personality is most likely to develop in a family environment in which dominating parents who are anxious about status use physical discipline but show very little love in raising their children (Adorno et al., 1950). Other scholars have linked

A speech code is a set of rules or regulations that limit, restrict, or ban speech beyond strict legal limitations upon freedom of speech or press found in the legal definitions of harassment, slander, libel, and fighting words. Advocates for speech codes in higher education argue that even though hateful, racist speech is protected by the First Amendment, there still must be protection against speech that might constitute a direct threat to an individual or might provoke an immediate violent response. For example, one university's code prohibits "conduct that is sufficiently severe and pervasive that it alters the conditions of education or employment and creates an environment that a reasonable person would find intimidating, harassing or humiliating" (*Dallas Morning News*, 2015). In lawsuits involving public universities, however, the courts have typically ruled that the rights bestowed by the Constitution take precedent over any speech codes the institutions might devise (with specific exceptions that are beyond the scope of our discussion).

Other legal scholars argue that college speech codes are unconstitutional because they limit students' freedom of speech and send the wrong idea about what values should govern a free society. This approach is taken by the American Civil Liberties Union (2015):

Free speech rights are indivisible. Restricting the speech of one group or individual jeopardizes everyone's rights because the same laws or regulations used to silence bigots can be used to silence you. Conversely, laws that defend free speech for bigots can be used to defend the rights of civil rights workers, anti-war protesters, lesbian and gay activists and others fighting for justice.

Therefore, the fundamental right to free speech should not be restricted even for bigots because this might mean that

rights become restricted for other persons who are fighting for tolerance of diversity and for justice. The assumption is that aggrieved individuals will engage in *counterspeech* that offsets the negative, racist, or sexist speech. *Counterspeech* refers to the process of using more speech to contradict the negative expressions and add new thoughts and values to the marketplace of ideas. But as Boston College Law School professor Kent Greenfield (2015) has stated, "Those not targeted by the [hate] speech can sit back and recite how distasteful such racism or sexism is, and isn't it too bad so little can be done. Meanwhile, those targeted by the speech are forced to speak out, yet again, to reassert their right to be treated equally, to be free to learn or work in an environment that does not threaten them with violence." According to Professor Greenfield, counterspeech is both "exhausting" and "distracting" because individuals continually have to be speaking up and standing up for their rights, emphasizing why they should not be oppressed by other people. From this perspective, individuals who are underrepresented—those with less power—do not have equal access to freedom of speech.

The debate over hate speech versus First Amendment rights has gone on for decades and no doubt will continue for many years to come because the racist incidents on campus continue from one generation of college students to the next.

Reflect & Analyze

How do laws and court interpretations affect how we perceive race and racism in this country? Is there a possibility that counterspeech might produce new ideas about race and how to get along with one another? Why or why not?

prejudiced attitudes to traits such as submissiveness to authority, extreme anger toward outgroups, and conservative religious and political beliefs (Altemeyer, 1981, 1988; Weigel and Howes, 1985).

Whereas prejudice is an attitude, **discrimination** involves actions or practices of dominant-group members (or their representatives) that have a harmful effect on members of a subordinate group. Prejudiced attitudes do not always lead to discriminatory behavior. As shown in ■ Figure 9.4, sociologist Robert K. Merton (1949) identified four combinations of attitudes and responses. *Unprejudiced nondiscriminators* are not personally prejudiced and do not discriminate against others. For example, two players on a professional sports team may be best friends even they are of different races. *Unprejudiced discriminators* may have no personal prejudice but still engage in

discriminatory behavior because of peer-group pressure or economic, political, or social interests. For example, on some sports teams, players may hold no genuine prejudice toward players from diverse racial or ethnic origins but

scapegoat

a person or group that is incapable of offering resistance to the hostility or aggression of others.

authoritarian personality

a personality type characterized by excessive conformity, submissiveness to authority, intolerance, insecurity, a high level of superstition, and rigid, stereotypic thinking.

discrimination

actions or practices of dominant-group members (or their representatives) that have a harmful effect on members of a subordinate group.



Michael Greenlar/TopFoto

FIGURE 9.3 According to the frustration–aggression hypothesis, members of white supremacy groups such as the Ku Klux Klan often use members of subordinate racial and ethnic groups as scapegoats for societal problems over which they have no control.

believe that they have to impress their “friends” by making disparaging remarks about persons of color so that they can get into, or remain in, a peer group. By contrast, *prejudiced nondiscriminators* hold personal prejudices but do not discriminate because of peer pressure, legal demands, or a desire for profits. For example, professional sports teams’ owners and coaches who hold prejudiced beliefs may hire a player of color to enhance the team’s ability to win. Finally, *prejudiced discriminators* hold personal prejudices and actively discriminate against others. For example, a baseball umpire who is personally prejudiced against persons of color may intentionally call a play incorrectly based on that prejudice. Of course, we hope that such an umpire does not exist or that his or her actions would be quickly sanctioned if such an event occurred. But the purpose of Merton’s typology is to show that prejudice and discrimination do not always coexist as directly and specifically as many of us might imagine.

Discriminatory actions vary in severity, from the use of derogatory labels to violence against individuals and groups. The ultimate form of discrimination occurs when people are considered to be unworthy to live because of their race or ethnicity. **Genocide** is the deliberate, systematic killing of an entire people or nation. Examples of genocide include the killing of thousands of Native Americans by white settlers in North America and the extermination of six million European Jews by Nazi Germany. A lack of consensus exists as to whether genocide has occurred in the twenty-first century. Some analysts believe that the mass slaughter and rape of Darfuri men, women, and children in Western Sudan that began in 2003 should be classified as genocide. However, international governing bodies typically have ruled that this situation does not fit the description because for something to be identified as genocide, the perpetrators

must have the intent to destroy an entire group. As well, inflicting damage on a group or removing the population from a location does not qualify. More recently, the term *ethnic cleansing* has been used to define a policy of “cleansing” geographic areas by forcing persons of other races or religions to flee—or die. For example, Myanmar military forces committed grave abuses—often including murder—against Rohingya Muslims, causing more than 730,000 Rohingya to flee to Bangladesh to escape the atrocities associated with this campaign of ethnic cleansing. Some have remained stuck in Bangladesh refugee camps while others have found themselves arrested and tortured upon returning to Myanmar (Human Rights Watch, 2018a, 2018b).

Discrimination varies in how it is carried out. Individuals may act on their own or they

may operate within the context of large-scale organizations and institutions, such as schools, churches, corporations, and governmental agencies. How does individual discrimination differ from institutional discrimination?

Individual discrimination consists of one-on-one acts by members of the dominant group that harm members of the subordinate group or their property. Individual discrimination is often considered to be based on the prejudicial beliefs of bigoted individuals who overtly express those beliefs through discriminatory actions. For example, a

	Prejudiced attitude?	Discriminatory behavior?
Unprejudiced nondiscriminator	No	No
Unprejudiced discriminator	No	Yes
Prejudiced nondiscriminator	Yes	No
Prejudiced discriminator	Yes	Yes

FIGURE 9.4 Merton’s Typology of Prejudice and Discrimination

Merton’s typology shows that some people may be prejudiced but not discriminate against others. Do you think that it is possible for a person to discriminate against some people without holding a prejudiced attitude toward them? Why or why not?

college student may write racist graffiti on the dorm door of another student because the perpetrator possesses bigoted attitudes about the superiority or inferiority of others based on their race or ethnicity.

However, sociologists emphasize that individual discrimination is not purely *individual*. As sociologists in the past moved beyond studying individual racial discrimination, they found that a close relationship exists between individual and institutional discrimination because they are two aspects of the same phenomenon. Simply stated, when individuals engage in racial discrimination, their actions are *shaped* by structural racial inequalities in the existing society or social system; in turn, their actions *reinforce* existing large-scale patterns of discrimination, which we refer to as institutional discrimination. **Institutional discrimination** consists of the day-to-day practices of organizations and institutions that have a harmful effect on members of subordinate groups. For example, a bank might consistently deny loans to people of a certain race; a university might not accept additional Asian American students in its first-year class or medical school because of an institutional assumption that persons in this racial-ethnic category are already overrepresented at the school. However, it is important to note that institutional discrimination is carried out by the *individuals* who implement the policies and procedures of organizations.

Sociologist Joe R. Feagin (Feagin and Feagin, 2012) has identified four major types of discrimination:

1. **Isolate discrimination** is harmful action intentionally taken by a dominant-group member against a member of a subordinate group. This type of discrimination occurs without the support of other members of the dominant group in the immediate social or community context. For example, a prejudiced judge may give harsher sentences to African American defendants but may not be supported by the judicial system in that action.
2. **Small-group discrimination** is harmful action intentionally taken by a limited number of dominant-group members against members of subordinate groups. This type of discrimination is not supported by existing norms or other dominant-group members in the immediate social or community context. For example, a small group of white students may hang nooses (that signify the practice of racial lynching in the past) on the door of an African American professor's office without the support of other students or faculty members.
3. **Direct institutionalized discrimination** is an organizationally prescribed or community-prescribed action that intentionally has a differential and negative impact on members of subordinate groups.

These actions are routinely carried out by a number of dominant-group members based on the norms of the immediate organization or community. Intentional exclusion of people of color from public accommodations in the past is an example of this type of discrimination.

4. **Indirect institutionalized discrimination** refers to practices that have a harmful effect on subordinate-group members even though the organizationally or community-prescribed norms or regulations guiding these actions were initially established with no intent to harm. For example, special education classes were originally intended to provide extra educational opportunities for children with various types of disabilities. However, critics claim that these programs have amounted to racial segregation in many school districts.

Various types of racial and ethnic discrimination call for divergent remedies if we are to reduce discriminatory actions and practices in contemporary social life. For more than a century, some U.S. sociologists have analyzed the complex relationship between prejudice and discrimination. Some have reached the conclusion that prejudice is difficult, if not seemingly impossible, to eradicate because of the deeply held racist beliefs and attitudes that are often passed on from person to person and from one generation to the next. However, the persistence of prejudicial attitudes and beliefs does not mean that racial and ethnic discrimination should be allowed to flourish until such a time as prejudice is effectively eliminated. From this approach, discrimination must be aggressively tackled through demands for change and through policies that specifically target patterns of discrimination.

Sociological Perspectives on Race and Ethnic Relations

Symbolic interactionist, functionalist, and conflict analysts examine race and ethnic relations in different ways. Symbolic interactionists examine how microlevel contacts between people may produce either greater racial tolerance or increased levels of hostility. Functionalists focus on the macrolevel intergroup processes that occur

genocide

the deliberate, systematic killing of an entire people or nation.

individual discrimination

behavior consisting of one-on-one acts by members of the dominant group that harm members of the subordinate group or their property.

institutional discrimination

the day-to-day practices of organizations and institutions that have a harmful effect on members of subordinate groups.

between members of dominant and subordinate groups in society. Conflict theorists analyze power and economic differentials between the dominant group and subordinate groups.

Symbolic Interactionist Perspectives

What happens when people from different racial and ethnic groups come into contact with one another? Symbolic interactionists claim that intergroup contact may either intensify or reduce racial and ethnic stereotyping and prejudice, depending on the context. In the *contact hypothesis*, symbolic interactionists point out that contact between people from divergent groups should lead to favorable attitudes and behavior *when certain factors are present*. Members of each group must (1) have equal status, (2) pursue the same goals, (3) cooperate with one another to achieve their goals, and (4) receive positive feedback when they interact with one another in positive, nondiscriminatory ways (■ Figure 9.5). However, if these factors are not present, intergroup contact may lead to increased stereotyping and prejudice.

Of course, intergroup contact does not always include the four factors just described. What then happens when individuals meet someone who does not conform to their existing stereotype? According to symbolic interactionists, they frequently ignore anything that contradicts the stereotype, or they interpret the situation to support their prejudices. For example, a person who does not fit the stereotype may be seen as an exception: “You’re not like other [persons of a particular race].” Conversely, when a person is seen as

conforming to a stereotype, he or she may be treated simply as one of “you people.”

Symbolic interactionist perspectives make us aware of the importance of intergroup contact and the fact that it may either intensify or reduce racial and ethnic stereotyping and prejudice.

Functionalist Perspectives

How do members of subordinate racial and ethnic groups become a part of the dominant group? To answer this question, early functionalists studied immigration and patterns of dominant- and subordinate-group interactions.

Assimilation *Assimilation* is a process by which members of subordinate racial and ethnic groups become absorbed into the dominant culture. To some analysts, assimilation is functional because it contributes to the stability of society by minimizing group differences that might otherwise result in hostility and violence.

Assimilation occurs at several distinct levels, including the cultural, structural, biological, and psychological stages. *Cultural assimilation*, or *acculturation*, occurs when members of an ethnic group adopt dominant-group traits, such as language, dress, values, religion, and food preferences. Cultural assimilation in this country initially followed an “Anglo conformity” model; members of subordinate ethnic groups were expected to conform to the culture of the dominant white Anglo-Saxon population. However, members of some groups refused to be assimilated and sought to maintain their unique cultural identity.

Structural assimilation, or *integration*, occurs when members of subordinate racial or ethnic groups gain acceptance in everyday social interaction with members of the dominant group. This type of assimilation typically starts in large, impersonal settings such as schools and workplaces, and only later (if at all) results in close friendships and intermarriage. *Biological assimilation*, or *amalgamation*, occurs when members of one group marry those of other social or ethnic groups. Biological assimilation has been more complete in some other countries, such as Mexico and Brazil, than in the United States.

Psychological assimilation involves a change in racial or ethnic self-identification on the part of an individual. Rejection by the dominant group may



Christian Petersen/Getty Images Sport/Getty Images

FIGURE 9.5 Symbolic interactionists believe that intergroup contact can reduce stereotyping and prejudice if group members have equal status, pursue the same goals and cooperate to achieve them, and receive positive feedback when they interact with one another in positive ways. Do sports enable such interaction? Why or why not?



Hulton Archive/Getty Images

FIGURE 9.6 Segregation exists when specific ethnic groups are set apart from the dominant group and have unequal access to power and privilege. What examples of segregation do you see today?

prevent psychological assimilation by members of some subordinate racial and ethnic groups, especially those with visible characteristics such as skin color or facial features that differ from those of the dominant group.

Ethnic Pluralism Instead of complete assimilation, many groups share elements of the mainstream culture while remaining culturally distinct from both the dominant group and other social and ethnic groups. *Ethnic pluralism* is the coexistence of a variety of distinct racial and ethnic groups within one society.

Equalitarian pluralism, or *accommodation*, is a situation in which ethnic groups coexist in equality with one another. Switzerland has been described as a model of equalitarian pluralism; more than six million people with French, German, and Italian cultural heritages peacefully coexist there. *Inequalitarian pluralism*, or *segregation*, exists when specific ethnic groups are set apart from the dominant group and have unequal access to power and privilege. *Segregation* is the spatial and social separation of categories of people by race, ethnicity, class, gender, and/or religion (■ Figure 9.6). Segregation may be enforced by law. *De jure segregation* refers to laws that systematically enforced the physical and social separation of African Americans in all areas of public life. For example, “Jim Crow” laws legalized the separation of the races in public accommodations (such as hotels, restaurants, transportation, hospitals, jails, schools, churches, and cemeteries) in the southern United States after the Civil War (Feagin and Feagin, 2012).

Segregation may also be enforced by custom. *De facto segregation*—racial separation and inequality enforced by custom—is more difficult to document than *de jure*

segregation. For example, residential segregation is still prevalent in many U.S. cities; owners, landlords, real estate agents, and apartment managers often use informal mechanisms to maintain their properties for “whites only.” Even middle-class people of color find that racial polarization is fundamental to the residential layout of many cities.

Although functionalist explanations provide a description of how some early white ethnic immigrants assimilated into the cultural mainstream, they do not adequately account for the persistent racial segregation and economic inequality experienced by people of color.

Conflict Perspectives

Conflict theorists focus on economic stratification and access to power in their analyses of race and ethnic relations. Some emphasize the castelike nature of racial stratification, others analyze class-based discrimination, and still others examine internal colonialism and gendered racism.

The Caste Perspective The caste perspective views racial and ethnic inequality as a permanent feature of U.S. society. According to this approach, the African American experience must be viewed as different from that of other racial or ethnic groups. African Americans were the only group to be subjected to slavery; when slavery was abolished, a caste system was instituted to maintain economic and social inequality between whites and African Americans (Feagin and Feagin, 2012).

The caste system was strengthened by *antimiscegenation laws*, which prohibited sexual intercourse or marriage between persons of different races. Most states had such laws, which were later expanded to include relationships between whites and Chinese, Japanese, and Filipinos.

assimilation

a process by which members of subordinate racial and ethnic groups become absorbed into the dominant culture.

ethnic pluralism

the coexistence of a variety of distinct racial and ethnic groups within one society.

segregation

the spatial and social separation of categories of people by race, ethnicity, class, gender, and/or religion.

Class Perspectives Although the caste perspective points out that racial stratification may be permanent because of structural elements such as the law, it has been criticized for not examining the role of class in perpetuating racial inequality. Class perspectives emphasize the role of the capitalist class in racial exploitation. Based on early theories of race relations by African American scholar W. E. B. Du Bois, sociologist Oliver C. Cox (1948) suggested that African Americans were enslaved because they were the cheapest and best workers the owners could find for heavy labor in mines and on plantations. Thus, the profit motive of capitalists, not skin color or racial prejudice, accounts for slavery.

Sociologists have also debated the relative importance of class and race in explaining the unequal life chances of African Americans. Sociologists William Julius Wilson and Richard P. Taub (2007) have suggested that race, cultural factors, social-psychological variables, and social class must *all* be taken into account in examining the life chances of “inner-city residents.” Their analysis focuses on how race, ethnicity, and class tensions are all important in assessing how residents live their lives in four low-income Chicago neighborhoods and why this finding is important for the rest of America as well.

How do conflict theorists view the relationship among race, class, and sports? Simply stated, sports reflects the interests of the wealthy and powerful. At all levels, sports exploits athletes (even highly paid ones) in order to gain high levels of profit and prestige for coaches, managers, and owners. In particular, African American

athletes and central-city youths are exploited by the message of rampant consumerism. Many are given the unrealistic expectation that sports can be a ticket out of the ghetto or barrio. If they try hard enough (and wear the right athletic gear), they too can become wealthy and famous.

Internal Colonialism Why do some racial and ethnic groups continue to experience subjugation after many years? According to sociologist Robert Blauner (1972), groups that have been subjected to internal colonialism remain in subordinate positions longer than groups that voluntarily migrated to the United States. *Internal colonialism* occurs when members of a racial or ethnic group are conquered or colonized and forcibly placed under the economic and political control of the dominant group. This idea has been so widely received that it is often referred to as the “Blauner hypothesis” and is still used in research.

In the United States, indigenous populations (including groups known today as Native Americans and Mexican Americans) were colonized by European Americans and others who invaded their lands and conquered them. In the process, indigenous groups lost property, political rights, aspects of their culture, and often their lives. The capitalist class acquired cheap labor and land through this government-sanctioned racial exploitation. The effects of past internal colonialism are reflected today in the number of Native Americans who live on government reservations and in the poverty of Mexican Americans who lost their land and had no right to vote (■ Figure 9.7).



FIGURE 9.7 Grinding poverty is a pressing problem for families living along the border between the United States and Mexico. Economic development has been limited in areas where *colonias* such as this one are located, and the wealthy have derived far more benefit than others from recent changes in the global economy. How might the concept of internal colonialism be used to explain the impoverished conditions shown in this photo?

The internal colonialism perspective is rooted in the historical foundations of racial and ethnic inequality in the United States. However, it tends to view all voluntary immigrants as having many more opportunities than do members of colonized groups. Thus, this model does not explain the continued exploitation of some immigrant groups, such as the Chinese, Filipinos, Cubans, Vietnamese, and Haitians, and the greater acceptance of others, primarily those from northern Europe.

The Split-Labor-Market Theory Who benefits from the exploitation of people of color? Dual- or split-labor-market theory states that white workers and members of the capitalist class both benefit from the exploitation of people of color. *Split-labor market* refers to the division of the economy into two areas of employment: a primary sector or upper tier, composed of higher-paid (usually dominant-group) workers in more secure jobs, and a secondary sector or lower tier, composed of lower-paid (often subordinate-group) workers in jobs with little security and hazardous working conditions (Bonacich, 1972, 1976). According to this perspective, white workers in the upper tier may use racial discrimination against nonwhites to protect their positions. These actions most often occur when upper-tier workers feel threatened by lower-tier workers hired by capitalists to reduce labor costs and maximize corporate profits. In the past, immigrants were a source of cheap labor that employers could use to break strikes and keep wages down. Throughout U.S. history, higher-paid workers have responded with racial hostility and joined movements to curtail immigration and thus do away with the source of cheap labor.

Proponents of the split-labor-market theory suggest that white workers benefit from racial and ethnic antagonisms. However, these analysts typically do not examine the interactive effects of race, class, and gender in the workplace.

Perspectives on Race and Gender The term *gendered racism* refers to the interactive effect of racism and sexism on the exploitation of women of color. According to social psychologist Philomena Essed (1991), women's particular position must be explored within each racial or ethnic group because their experiences will not have been the same as men's in each grouping.

Capitalists do not equally exploit all workers. Gender and race or ethnicity are important in this exploitation. Historically, white men have monopolized the high-paying primary labor market. Many people of color and white women hold lower-tier jobs. Below that tier is the underground sector of the economy, characterized by illegal or quasi-legal activities such as drug-trafficking, prostitution, and working in sweatshops that do not meet minimum-wage and safety standards. Many undocumented workers and some white women and people of color attempt to earn a living in this sector, as further described in Chapter 13.

Racial Formation The *theory of racial formation* states that actions of the government substantially define racial and ethnic relations in the United States. Government actions range from race-related legislation to imprisonment of members of groups believed to be a threat to society. Omi and Winant (2013) suggest that the U.S. government has shaped the politics of race through actions and policies that cause people to be treated differently because of their race. For example, immigration legislation reflects racial biases. The Naturalization Law of 1790 permitted only white immigrants to qualify for naturalization; the Immigration Act of 1924 favored northern Europeans and excluded Asians and southern and eastern Europeans.

Social protest movements of various racial and ethnic groups periodically challenge the government's definition of racial realities. When this social rearticulation occurs, people's understanding about race may be restructured somewhat. For example, the African American protest movements of the 1950s and 1960s helped redefine the rights of people of color in the United States.

An Alternative Perspective: Critical Race Theory

Emerging out of scholarly law studies on racial and ethnic inequality, *critical race theory* derives its foundation from the U.S. civil-rights tradition. Critical race theory has several major premises, including the belief that racism is such an ingrained feature of U.S. society that it appears to be ordinary and natural to many people (Delgado, 1995). As a result, civil rights legislation and affirmative action laws (formal equality) may remedy some of the more overt, blatant forms of racial injustice but have little effect on subtle, business-as-usual forms of racism that people of color experience as they go about their everyday lives. Although many minority-group members participate in collegiate and professional sports, studies of sports and media show that overt and covert forms of racism persist in the twenty-first century.

internal colonialism

according to conflict theorists, a practice that occurs when members of a racial or ethnic group are conquered or colonized and forcibly placed under the economic and political control of the dominant group.

split-labor market

the division of the economy into two areas of employment: a primary sector or upper tier, composed of higher-paid (usually dominant-group) workers in more secure jobs, and a secondary sector or lower tier, composed of lower-paid (often subordinate-group) workers in jobs with little security and hazardous working conditions.

gendered racism

the interactive effect of racism and sexism on the exploitation of women of color.

theory of racial formation

the idea that actions of the government substantially define racial and ethnic relations in the United States.

CONCEPT Quick Review

Sociological Perspectives on Race and Ethnic Relations

	Focus	Theory/Hypothesis
Symbolic Interactionist	Microlevel contacts between individuals	Contact hypothesis
Functionalist	Macrolevel intergroup processes	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Assimilation <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Cultural b. Biological c. Structural d. Psychological 2. Ethnic pluralism <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Equalitarian pluralism b. Inequalitarian pluralism (segregation)
Conflict	Power/economic differentials between dominant and subordinate groups	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Caste perspective 2. Class perspective 3. Internal colonialism 4. Split-labor market 5. Gendered racism 6. Racial formation
Critical Race Theory	Racism as an ingrained feature of society that affects everyone's daily life	Laws may remedy overt discrimination but have little effect on subtle racism. Interest convergence is required for social change.

According to this approach, the best way to document racism and ongoing inequality in society is to listen to the lived experiences of people who have encountered such discrimination. In this way we can learn what actually happens in regard to racial oppression and the many effects it has on people, including alienation, depression, and certain physical illnesses. Central to this argument is the belief that *interest convergence* is a crucial factor in bringing about social change. According to legal scholar Derrick Bell, white elites tolerate or encourage racial advances for people of color *only* if the dominant-group members believe that their own self-interest will be served in so doing (cited in Delgado, 1995). From this approach, civil-rights laws have typically benefited white Americans as much (or more) as people of color because these laws have been used as mechanisms to ensure that “racial progress occurs at just the right pace: change that is too rapid would be unsettling to society at large; change that is too slow could prove destabilizing” (Delgado, 1995: xiv). The Concept Quick Review outlines the key aspects of each sociological perspective on race and ethnic relations.

Racial and Ethnic Groups in the United States

How do racial and ethnic groups come into contact with one another? How do they adjust to one another and to the dominant group over time? Sociologists have explored these questions extensively; however, a detailed historical

account of the unique experiences of each group is beyond the scope of this chapter. Instead, we look briefly at intergroup contacts. In the process, sports will be used as an example of how members of some groups have attempted to gain upward mobility and become integrated into society.

Native Americans and Alaska Natives

As the oldest U.S. racial minority group, the American Indian (Native American) and Alaska Native population is believed to have migrated to North America from Asia thousands of years ago, as shown on the time line in ■ Figure 9.8. One of the most widely accepted beliefs about this migration is that the first groups of Mongolians made their way across a natural bridge of land called Beringia into present-day Alaska. From there, they moved to what is now Canada and the northern United States, eventually making their way as far south as the tip of South America.

As schoolchildren are taught, Spanish explorer Christopher Columbus first encountered the native inhabitants in 1492 and referred to them as “Indians.” When European settlers (or invaders) arrived on this continent, the native inhabitants’ way of life was changed forever. Experts estimate that approximately two million native inhabitants lived in North America at that time; however, their numbers had been reduced to fewer than 240,000 by 1900.

Genocide, Forced Migration, and Forced Assimilation

Native Americans have been the victims of genocide and forced migration. Although the United States never had

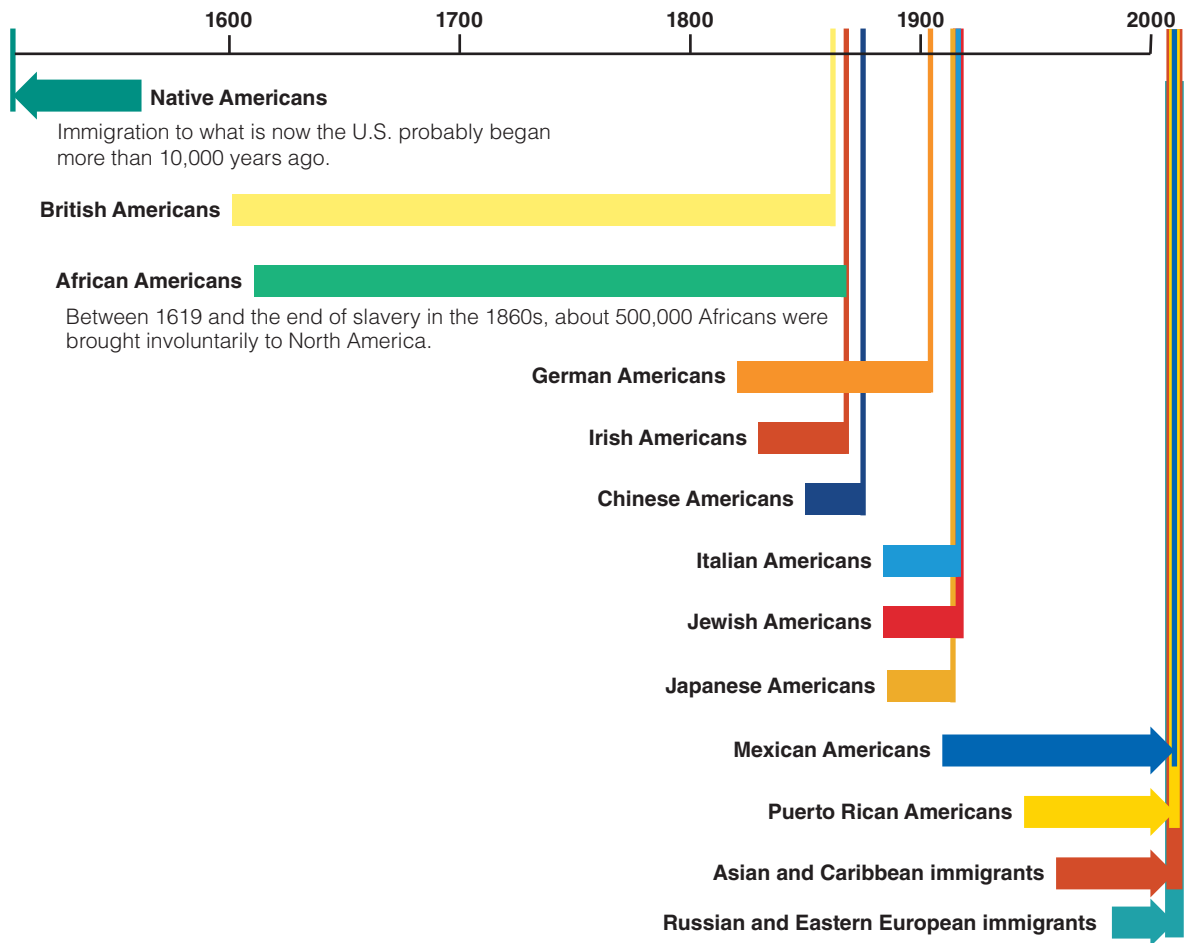


FIGURE 9.8 Time Line of Racial and Ethnic Groups in the United States

an official policy that set in motion a pattern of deliberate extermination, many Native Americans were either massacred or died from European diseases (such as typhoid, smallpox, and measles) and starvation. In battle, Native Americans were often no match for the Europeans, who had “modern” weaponry. Europeans justified their aggression by stereotyping the Native Americans as “savages” and “heathens.”

After the Revolutionary War, the federal government offered treaties to the Native Americans so that more of their land could be acquired for the growing white population. Scholars note that the government broke treaty after treaty as it engaged in a policy of wholesale removal of indigenous nations in order to clear the land for settlement by Anglo-Saxon “pioneers.” Entire nations were forced to move in order to accommodate the white settlers. The “Trail of Tears” was one of the most disastrous of the forced migrations. In the coldest part of the winter of 1832, more than half of the members of the Cherokee Nation died during or as a result of their forced relocation from the southeastern United States to the Indian Territory in Oklahoma.

Native Americans were subjected to forced assimilation on reservations after 1871. Native American children were placed in boarding schools operated by the Bureau

of Indian Affairs to hasten their assimilation into the dominant culture. About 98 percent of native lands had been expropriated by 1920. This process was aided by the Dawes Act (1877), which allowed the federal government to usurp Native American lands for the benefit of corporations and other non-native settlers who sought to turn a profit from oil and gas exploration and cattle-grazing.

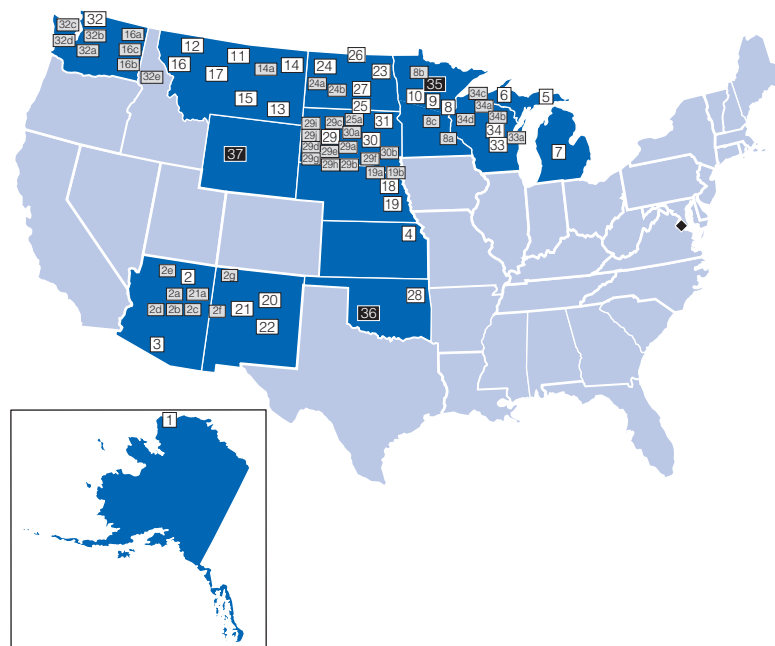
Native Americans and Alaska Natives Today Currently, about 6.8 million Native Americans and Alaska Natives, including those of more than one race, live in the United States, including Aleuts, Inuit (Eskimos), Cherokee, Navajo, Choctaw, Chippewa, Sioux, and more than 560 other nations of varying sizes and different locales. There is a wide diversity among the people in this category: Each nation has its own culture, history, and unique identity, and more than 250 Native American languages are spoken today.

Although Native Americans live in a number of states, they are concentrated in specific regions of the country. Some cities with the largest American Indian/Alaska Native populations are Phoenix, AZ; New York, NY; Los Angeles, CA; Tulsa, OK; and Albuquerque, NM. Less than one-third of all American Indians and Alaska Natives reside on federal American Indian reservations and/or off-reservation

trust lands or other tribal-designated areas. There are 573 federally recognized American Indian tribes or nations in this country. This designation is made by the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) of the United States.

Data continue to indicate that Native Americans are the most disadvantaged racial or ethnic group in the United States in terms of income, employment, housing, nutrition, and health. American Indians and Alaska Natives have higher rates of poverty than any other racial category at 25.4 percent. The life expectancy of this group is 5.5 years less than the U.S. all-races population. They also have higher rates of infant mortality than white American (non-Hispanic) infants: American Indian and Alaska Native infants are more likely to die from pneumonia and influenza. American Indian and Alaska Native suicide rates are nearly 50 percent higher than those of white Americans (non-Hispanic). Suicide is particularly a concern among American Indian and Alaska Native males and among persons of both sexes under age twenty-five. Historically, Native Americans have had very limited educational opportunities and very high rates of unemployment. Opportunities in higher education first started in community colleges. Since the introduction of six tribally controlled community colleges in the 1970s, a growing network of tribal colleges and universities now serve

over 30,000 students from more than 250 tribal nations (see ■ Figure 9.9). This network has been successful in providing some Native Americans with the necessary education to move into skilled jobs and other professions (■ Figure 9.10). Across the nation, Native Americans own and operate many types of enterprises, such as construction companies, computer-graphic-design firms, grocery stores, and management consulting businesses. Casino gambling operations and cigarette shops on Native American



Member Tribal Colleges

Alaska 1 Ilisagvik College Barrow, AK Arizona 2 Diné College Tsaile, AZ 2a Chinle, AZ 2b Ganado, AZ 2c Window Rock, AZ 2d Tuba City, AZ 2e Kayenta, AZ 2f Crownpoint, NM 2g Shiprock, NM 3 Tohono O'odham Community College Sells, AZ Kansas 4 Haskell Indian Nations University Lawrence, KS Michigan 5 Bay Mills Community College Brimley, MI 6 Keweenaw Bay Ojibwa Community College Baraga, MI 7 Saginaw Chippewa Tribal College Mount Pleasant, MI	Minnesota 8 Fond du Lac Tribal and Community College Cloquet, MN 8a Minneapolis, MN 8b Red Lake, MN 8c Onamia, MN 9 Leech Lake Tribal College Cass Lake, MN 10 White Earth Tribal and Community College Mahnommen, MN Montana 11 Aaniiih Nakoda College Harlem, MT 12 Blackfeet Community College Browning, MT 13 Chief Dull Knife College Lame Deer, MT 14 Fort Peck Community College Poplar, MT 14a Wolf Point, MT 15 Little Big Horn College Crow Agency, MT 16 Salish Kootenai College Pablo, MT	Colville, WA 16a Spokane, WA 16b Wellpinit, WA 17 Stone Child College Box Elder, MT Nebraska 18 Little Priest Tribal College Winnebago, NE 19 Nebraska Indian Community College Macy, NE 19a Niobrara, NE 19b South Sioux City, NE New Mexico 20 Institute of American Indian Arts Santa Fe, NM 21 Navajo Technical University Crownpoint, NM 21a Chinle, AZ 22 Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute Albuquerque, NM North Dakota 23 Cankdeska Cikana Community College Fort Totten, ND 24 Fort Berthold Community College New Town, ND	Colville, WA 16a Spokane, WA 16b Wellpinit, WA 17 Stone Child College Box Elder, MT Nebraska 18 Little Priest Tribal College Winnebago, NE 19 Nebraska Indian Community College Macy, NE 19a Niobrara, NE 19b South Sioux City, NE New Mexico 20 Institute of American Indian Arts Santa Fe, NM 21 Navajo Technical University Crownpoint, NM 21a Chinle, AZ 22 Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute Albuquerque, NM North Dakota 23 Cankdeska Cikana Community College Fort Totten, ND 24 Fort Berthold Community College New Town, ND	24a Mandaree, ND 24b White Shield, ND 25 Sitting Bull College Fort Yates, ND 25a McLaughlin, SD 26 Turtle Mountain Community College Belcourt, ND 27 United Tribes Technical College Bismarck, ND Oklahoma 28 College of the Muscogee Nation Okmulgee, OK South Dakota 29 Oglala Lakota College Kyle, SD 29a Allen, SD 29b East Wakpamni, SD 29c Eagle Butte, SD 29d Manderson, SD 29e Porcupine, SD 29f Martin, SD 29g Oglala, SD 29h Pine Ridge, SD 29i Wambli, SD 29j Rapid City, SD 30 Sinte Gleska University Mission, SD	30a Lower Brule, SD 30b Marty, SD 31 Sisseton Wahpeton College Sisseton, SD Virginia 32 American Indian Higher Education Consortium Alexandria, VA Washington 32 Northwest Indian College Bellingham, WA 32a Auburn, WA 32b Tulalip, WA 32c La Conner, WA 32d Kingston, WA 32e Lapwai, ID Wisconsin 33 College of Menominee Nation Keshena, WI 33a Green Bay-Oneida Campus 34 Lac Courte Oreilles Ojibwa Community College Hayward, WI 34a Odanah, WI 34b Lac du Flambeau, WI	34c Bayfield, WI 34d Hertel, WI AIHEC Associate Members Minnesota 35 Red Lake Tribal College Red Lake, MN Oklahoma 36 Comanche Nation College Lawton, OK Wyoming 37 Wind River Tribal College Ethete, WY
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FIGURE 9.9 U.S. Tribal Colleges and Universities

Source: American Indian College Fund, 2019.

reservations—resulting from a reinterpretation of federal law in the 1990s—have brought more income to some of the tribal nations. However, this change has not been without its critics, who believe that such businesses bring new problems for Native Americans.

In 2009 Native Americans received a \$3.4 billion settlement from the federal government after the conclusion of *Cobell v. Salazar*, a thirteen-year-old lawsuit that accused the government of mishandling revenues generated by the



Native American - Indian culture/Alamy Stock Photo

FIGURE 9.10 Historically, Native Americans have had a low rate of college attendance. However, the development of a network of tribal colleges has provided them with a local source for upward mobility.

extraction of natural resources from American Indian land trusts as a result of the Dawes Act. Although the federal government was responsible for leasing tribal lands for use by mining, lumber, oil, and gas industries and passing on royalty payments to the Native Americans to whom the lands belonged, they derived little benefit because of the government's massive abuse of the trust funds.

Native Americans are currently in a transition from a history marked by prejudice and discrimination to a contemporary life in which they may find new opportunities. Many see the challenge for Native Americans and Alaska Natives today as erasing negative stereotypes while maintaining their heritage and obtaining recognition for their contributions to this nation's development and growth. For the poorest of poor, however, access to opportunities is very limited.

Native Americans and Sports Early in the twentieth century, Native Americans such as Jim Thorpe gained national visibility as athletes in football, baseball, and track and field. Teams at boarding schools such as the Carlisle Indian Industrial School in Pennsylvania and the Haskell Institute in Kansas were well known. However, after the first three decades of the twentieth century, Native Americans became less prominent in sports. Native American scholar Joseph B. Oxendine (2003) attributes the lack of athletic participation to these factors: (1) a reduction in opportunities for developing sports skills, (2) restricted opportunities for participation, and (3) a lessening of Native Americans' interest in competing with and against non-Native Americans. However, in the twenty-first century Native Americans slowly began making their mark in a few professional sports. Sam Bradford (Cherokee Nation) made inroads in professional football. Other notables are in golf (Notah Begay III), lacrosse (Brett Bucktooth), bowling (Mike Edwards), rodeo (Clint Harry), and baseball (Kyle

Lohse). Some college and NBA players, such as Mario Chalmers, Damon Cikanek, and Muhamad Cole, were born in Alaska. More Native American athletes are being recognized in the twenty-first century (visit the website and social media sites for NDNSPORTS.com).

White Anglo-Saxon Protestants (British Americans)

Whereas Native Americans/Alaska Natives have been among the most disadvantaged peoples in this country, white Anglo-Saxon Protestants (WASPs) have been the most privileged group. Although many English settlers initially came to North America as indentured servants or as prisoners, they quickly emerged as the dominant group, creating a core culture (including language, laws, and holidays) to which all other groups were expected to adapt. Most of the WASP immigrants arriving from northern Europe were advantaged over later immigrants because they were highly skilled and did not experience high levels of prejudice and discrimination.

Class, Gender, and WASPs Like members of other racial and ethnic groups, not all WASPs are alike. Social class and gender affect their life chances and opportunities. For example, members of the working class and the poor do not have political and economic power; men in the capitalist class do. WASPs constitute the majority of the upper class and maintain cohesion through business and social networks and through interactions with one another in elite settings such as private schools and country clubs (Kendall, 2002).

Today, the U.S. Census Bureau uses the term *white alone* or *white (non-Hispanic)* to refer to a person having origins in any of the original peoples of Europe, the Middle East, or North Africa. In the latest (2010) federal census, people who indicated that they were Caucasian, white, Irish, German, Polish, Arab, Lebanese, Palestinian, Algerian, Moroccan, and Egyptian, among others, were included in the white racial category (Hixson, Hepler, and Kim, 2011). Currently, the "non-Hispanic white alone" population is the "majority" group (at nearly 198 million) in the United States because it is both the largest racial and ethnic group and because it also accounts for greater than 50 percent of the nation's total population. By 2060, it is projected that this category will fall to 44 percent as its population falls to 182 million. At that point, we will have what has been referred to as a "majority-minority nation" (Frey, 2018).

The median household income of whites (non-Hispanic) of \$70,642 in 2018 is second only to that of Asian Americans (\$87,194) and significantly above that of Hispanic or Latinx (\$51,450) and African American (black) residents (\$41,361) of the United States (Semega et al., 2019). Likewise, the poverty rate for whites (non-Hispanic) was 8.1 percent in

2018 while it was 20.8 percent for African Americans and 17.6 percent among Hispanics (Semega et al., 2019).

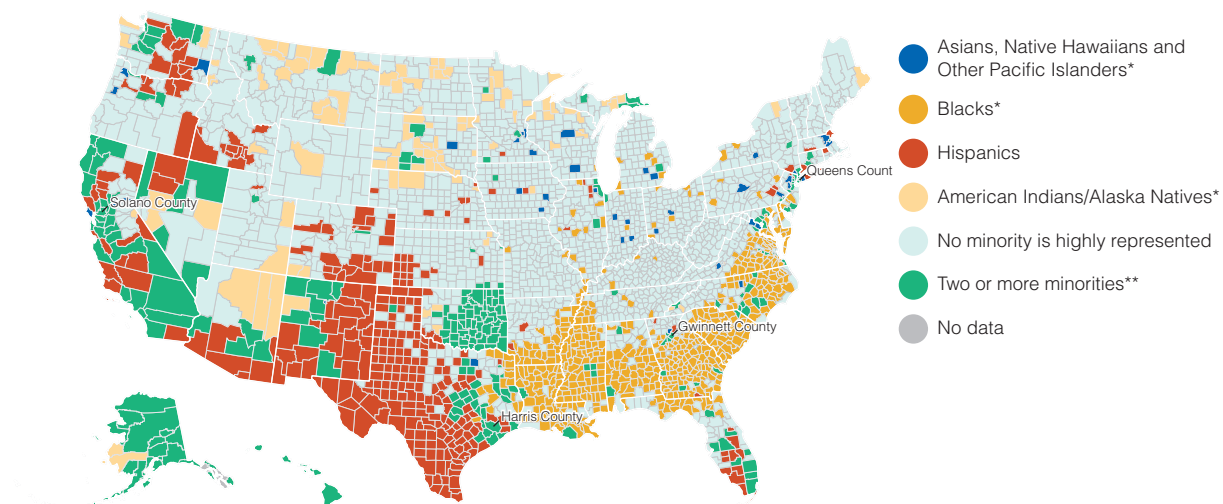
WASPs and Sports Family background, social class, and gender play an important role in the sports participation of WASPs. Contemporary North American football was invented at the Ivy League colleges and was dominated by young, affluent WASPs who had the time and money to attend college and participate in sports activities. Today, whites are more likely than any other racial or ethnic group to become professional athletes in all sports except football and basketball. Sports that are more likely to attract white student-athletes are soccer, sailing and rowing, tennis, golf, lacrosse, and water polo. Many white high school and college athletes do not view sports as an avenue to success and achievement of the American Dream as much as some lower-income minority students, who view themselves as faced with fewer options for upward mobility. It is a well-known fact that the probability of competing in athletics beyond the high school interscholastic level and moving into NCAA programs, particularly at the Division I level, and then into the pros is extremely low. Until passage of Title IX laws were passed, women had little chance for involvement in college and professional sports.

African Americans

The African American (black) experience has been one uniquely marked by slavery, segregation, and persistent discrimination. There is a lack of consensus about whether

African American or *black* is the most appropriate term to refer to the approximately 47.4 million Americans of African descent who live in the United States today. Those who prefer the term *black* point out that it incorporates many African-descent groups living in this country that do not use *African American* as a racial or ethnic self-description. For example, many people who trace their origins to Haiti, Puerto Rico, or Jamaica typically identify themselves as “black” but not as “African American.” Although African Americans reside throughout the United States, the 2010 Census (the latest available at the time of this writing) indicated that the metropolitan areas with the largest black population included New York City, Atlanta, Chicago, Washington, D.C., Philadelphia, Miami, and Houston (Frey, 2018). ■ Figure 9.11 shows the U.S. racial and ethnic distribution based on the latest available information.

Although the earliest African Americans probably arrived in North America with the Spanish conquerors in the fifteenth century, most historians trace their arrival to about 1619, when the first groups of indentured servants were brought to the colony of Virginia. However, by the 1660s, indentured servanthood had turned into full-fledged slavery because of the enactment of laws that sanctioned the enslavement of African Americans. Despite the fact that the initial status of persons of African descent in this country may not have been too different from that of the English indentured servants, all of that changed with the passage of laws turning human beings into property and making slavery a status from which neither individuals nor their children could escape (Franklin, 1980).



A group is highly represented if its share of the area population is larger than its share of the national population for Hispanics (18.3%), blacks (12.5%), and Asians, Native Hawaiians and Other Pacific Islanders (5.9%) and at least 4% for American Indians/Alaska Natives, or persons identifying as multiracial.

*Non Hispanic members of group

**Two or more minority groups are highly represented or persons identified as multiracial are highly represented

FIGURE 9.11 U.S. Racial and Ethnic Distribution

While minority populations do continue to grow, regional differences in racial makeup are still quite pronounced, as this map shows.

Source: William H. Frey analysis of US Census population estimates, 2018

Between 1619 and the 1860s, about 500,000 Africans were forcibly brought to North America, primarily to work on southern plantations, and these actions were justified by the devaluation and stereotyping of African Americans. Some analysts believe that the central factor associated with the development of slavery in this country was the plantation system, which was heavily reliant on cheap and dependable manual labor. Slavery was primarily beneficial to the wealthy southern plantation owners, but many of the stereotypes used to justify slavery were eventually institutionalized in southern custom and practice (Wilson, 1978). However, some slaves and whites engaged in active resistance against slavery and its barbaric practices, which eventually resulted in slavery being outlawed in the northern states by the late 1700s. Slavery continued in the South until 1863, when it was abolished by the Emancipation Proclamation (Takaki, 1993).

Segregation and Lynching Gaining freedom did not give African Americans equality with whites. African Americans were subjected to many indignities because of race. Through informal practices in the North and *Jim Crow laws* in the South, African Americans experienced segregation in housing, employment, education, and all public accommodations. African Americans who did not stay in their “place” were often the victims of violent attacks and lynch mobs (Franklin, 1980). *Lynching* is a killing carried out by a group of vigilantes seeking revenge for an actual or imagined crime by the victim. The practice of lynching was used by whites to intimidate African Americans into staying “in their place.” It is estimated that as many as six thousand lynchings occurred from the end of the Civil War to the present, at least half of which have gone unrecorded (Feagin and Feagin, 2012). In spite of all odds, many African American women and men resisted oppression and did not give up in their struggle for equality.

In the twentieth century the lives of many African Americans were changed by industrialization and two world wars. When factories were built in the northern United States, many African American families left the rural South in hopes of finding jobs and a better life.

During the world wars, African Americans were a vital source of labor in war production industries; however, racial discrimination continued both on and off the job. In World War II, many African Americans fought for their country in segregated units in the military; after the war, they sought—and were denied—equal opportunities in the country for which they had risked their lives.

African Americans began to demand sweeping societal changes in the 1950s. Initially, the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and the civil rights movement used *civil disobedience*—nonviolent action seeking to change a policy or law by refusing to comply with it—to call attention to racial inequality and to demand greater inclusion of African Americans in all areas of public life. Subsequently, leaders of the Black Power movement, including Malcolm X and Marcus Garvey, advocated black pride and racial awareness

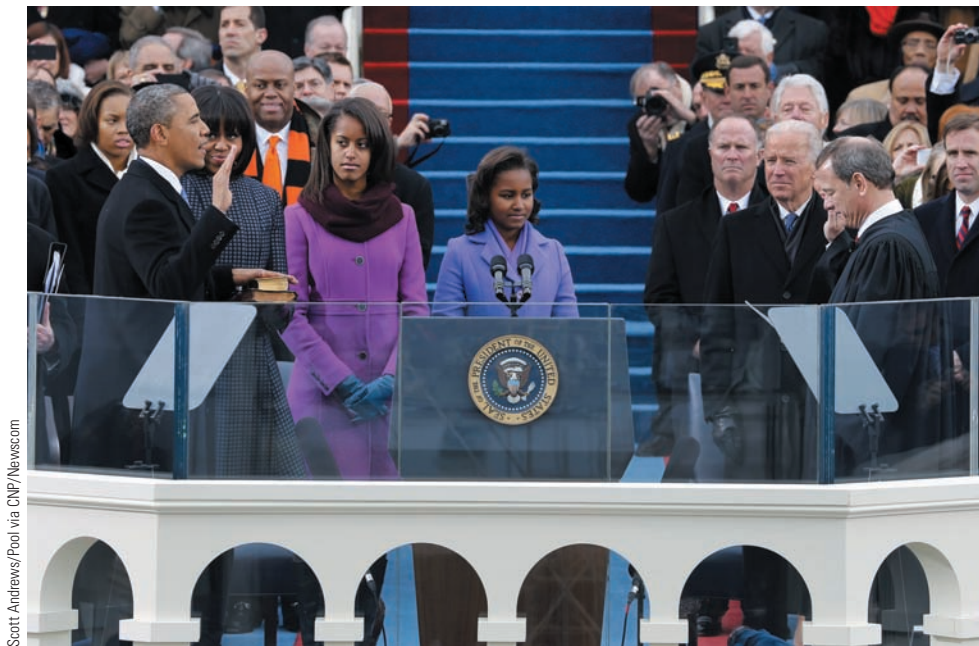
among African Americans. Gradually, racial segregation was outlawed by the courts and the federal government. For example, the Civil Rights Acts of 1964 and 1965 sought to do away with discrimination in education, housing, employment, and health care.

Affirmative action programs were instituted in both public-sector and private-sector organizations in an effort to bring about greater opportunities for African Americans and other previously excluded groups. *Affirmative action* refers to policies or procedures that are intended to promote equal opportunity for categories of people deemed to have been previously excluded from equality in education, employment, and other fields on the basis of characteristics such as race or ethnicity. Critics of affirmative action often assert that these policies amount to *reverse discrimination*—a person who is better qualified being denied a position because another person received preferential treatment as a result of affirmative action. Battles over affirmative action in higher education continue in the courts of the land well into the twenty-first century.

African Americans Today Blacks or African Americans make up about 13.4 percent of the U.S. population. Some are descendants of families that have been in this country for many generations; others are recent immigrants from Africa and the Caribbean. Black Haitians make up the largest group of recent Caribbean immigrants; others come from Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago. Recent African immigrants are primarily from Nigeria, Ethiopia, Ghana, and Kenya. They have been simultaneously “pushed” out of their countries of origin by severe economic and political turmoil and “pulled” by perceived opportunities for a better life in the United States. Recent immigrants are often victimized by the same racism that has plagued African Americans as a people for centuries.

Since the 1960s, many African Americans have made significant gains in politics, education, employment, and income. Between 1964 and 2019, the number of African Americans elected to political office (on local, state, and federal levels) increased from about 100 to more than 10,000 nationwide. At the local level, African Americans have won mayoral elections in many major cities that have large African American populations, such as Atlanta, Houston, New Orleans, Philadelphia, and Washington, D.C. At the national level, the top accomplishment of an African American in politics was the election of Barack Obama to the presidency in 2008 and his reelection to a second term of office in 2012 (■ Figure 9.12).

In 2019 there were fifty-two African Americans serving in the 116th U.S. Congress. Over the past six decades, more African Americans have made impressive occupational gains and joined the top socioeconomic classes in terms of earnings. Some of these individuals have become professionals while others have achieved great wealth and fame as entertainers, athletes, and entrepreneurs. But even those who make millions of dollars per year and live in the most affluent neighborhoods are not exempt from racial



Scott Andrews/Pool via CNP/Newscom

FIGURE 9.12 In August 2008, Barack Obama made history by becoming the first African American to receive the presidential nomination of a major political party, and on Election Day he was voted in as the first African American president of the United States. In 2012 Obama was reelected to his second term and is shown here taking the oath of office from Chief Justice John Roberts on January 21, 2013.

prejudice and discrimination. Likewise, although some African Americans have made substantial occupational and educational gains, many more have not. At the time of this writing in early 2020, for example, the unemployment rate is 5.0 for African Americans, but the rate for African Americans between the ages of sixteen and nineteen is 18.1 percent (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2019a).

African Americans and Sports In recent decades many African Americans have seen sports, particularly football and basketball, as a possible source of upward mobility because other means have been unavailable in the past. However, their achievements in sports have often been attributed to “natural ability” and not determination and hard work. Sociologists have rejected such biological explanations for African Americans’ success in sports and have focused instead on explanations rooted in the structure of society.

During the slavery era, a few African Americans gained better treatment and, occasionally, freedom by winning boxing matches on which their owners had bet large sums of money (McPherson, Curtis, and Loy, 1989). After emancipation, some African Americans found jobs in horse racing and baseball. For example, fourteen of the fifteen jockeys in the first Kentucky Derby (in 1875) were African Americans. A number of African Americans played on baseball teams; a few played in the Major Leagues until the Jim Crow laws forced them out. Then they formed their own “Negro” baseball and basketball leagues (Peterson, 1992/1970).

Since Jackie Robinson broke baseball’s “color line” in 1947, many African American athletes have played collegiate and professional sports. Even now, however, persistent class inequalities between whites and African Americans are reflected in the fact that, until recently, African Americans have primarily excelled in sports (such as basketball or football) that do not require much expensive equipment and specialized facilities in order to develop athletic skills. According to one sports analyst, African Americans typically participate in certain sports and not others because of the *sports opportunity structure*—the availability of facilities, coaching, and competition in the schools and community recreation programs in their area (Phillips, 1993).

Regardless of the sport in which they participate, African American male athletes continue to experience inequalities in coaching, management, and ownership opportunities in professional sports. In recent years, few of the teams in the NCAA elite “Football Bowl Subdivision”—postseason bowl-eligible competitors—and professional sports teams had African American head coaches. Today, African Americans remain significantly underrepresented in many other sports, including hockey, skiing, figure skating, golf, volleyball, softball, swimming, gymnastics, sailing, soccer, bowling, cycling, and tennis.

White Ethnic Americans

The term *white ethnic Americans* is applied to a wide diversity of immigrants who trace their origins to Ireland and to eastern and southern European countries such as Poland, Italy, Greece, Germany, Yugoslavia, and Russia and other former Soviet republics. Unlike the WASPs, who migrated primarily from northern Europe and assumed a dominant cultural position in society, white ethnic Americans arrived late in the nineteenth century and early in the twentieth century to find relatively high levels of prejudice and discrimination directed at them by nativist organizations that hoped to curb the entry of non-WASP European immigrants. Because many of the people in white ethnic American categories were not Protestant, they experienced discrimination because they were Catholic, Jewish, or members of other religious bodies, such as the Eastern Orthodox churches.

Discrimination Against White Ethnic Many white ethnic immigrants entered the United States between 1830 and 1924. Irish Catholics were among the first to arrive, driven out of Ireland by famine and English oppression, and seeking jobs in the United States (Feagin and Feagin, 2012). When they arrived, they found that British Americans controlled the major institutions of society. The next arrivals were Italians, who had been recruited for low-wage industrial and construction jobs. British Americans viewed Irish and Italian immigrants as “foreigners”: The Irish were stereotyped as apelike, filthy, bad-tempered, and heavy drinkers; the Italians were depicted as lawless, knife-wielding thugs looking for a fight, “dagos,” and “wops” (short for “without papers”) (Feagin and Feagin, 2012).

Both Irish Americans and Italian Americans were subjected to institutionalized discrimination in employment. Employment ads read “Help Wanted—No Irish Need Apply” and listed daily wages at \$1.30–1.50 for “whites” and \$1.15–1.25 for “Italians” (Gambino, 1975: 77). In spite of discrimination, white ethnics worked hard to establish themselves in the United States, often founding mutual self-help organizations and becoming politically active (Mangione and Morreale, 1992). Even in the twenty-first century, film and television continue to offer stereotypes of white ethnics that reveal that they are not always considered “white” in this country. Examples include numerous television shows and movies (*Jersey Shore* and *Real Housewives of New Jersey*, for example) that depict Italian Americans as mobsters, bigoted thugs, or food-making peasants such as those who flip pizzas or squash grapes or exhibit over-the-top behavior such as yelling and turning over tables in restaurants (Nittle, 2019).

Between 1880 and 1920, a wave of eastern European Jewish immigrants arrived in the United States and settled in the Northeast. Jewish Americans differ from other white ethnic groups in that some focus their identity primarily on their religion whereas others define their Jewishness in terms of ethnic group membership (Feagin and Feagin, 2012). In any case, Jews continued to be the victims of *anti-Semitism*—prejudice, hostile attitudes, and discriminatory behavior targeted at Jews. For example, signs in hotels read “No Jews Allowed,” and some “help-wanted” ads stated “Christians Only” (Levine, 1992: 55). In spite of persistent discrimination, Jewish Americans achieved substantial success in many areas, including business, education, the arts and sciences, law, and medicine.

However, old biases remain deeply embedded in the fabric of American life and are passed on from one generation to the next. An example of this kind of lingering prejudice surfaced when a Jewish student at UCLA who was being considered for the student council’s judicial board was asked the following by another student: “Given that you are a Jewish student and very active in the Jewish community, how do you see yourself being able to maintain an unbiased view?” (Nagourney, 2015). Although the vast majority of Jewish American students on college campuses nationwide are not asked questions such as

this, the discussion about possible bias in this student’s decision-making skills because of affiliation with Jewish organizations raises anew the fears and concerns of eras, apparently not all gone, when prejudice and discrimination were directed toward people because they were identified as Jews in this country and worldwide. Even today on college campuses, anti-Semitic posters and graffiti show contempt for Jewish Americans.

Acts of discrimination and violence continue. The Anti-Defamation League reported 780 anti-Semitic incidents in the first six months of 2019. White supremacy groups became more active in discriminating against Jewish individuals and institutions, including physical assaults against persons and vandalism and attacks against buildings and organizations. One of the most egregious attacks was the mass shooting at the Tree of Life synagogue in Pittsburgh, where eleven worshippers were killed by a gunman who allegedly yelled anti-Semitic epithets during Shabbat services (Green, 2019b).

White Ethnic and Sports Sports provided a pathway to assimilation for many white ethnics. The earliest collegiate football players who were not white Anglo-Saxon Protestants were of Irish, Italian, and Jewish ancestry. Sports participation provided educational opportunities that some white ethnics would not have had otherwise.

Boxing became a way to make a living for white ethnics who did not participate in collegiate sports (■ Figure 9.13). Boxing promoters encouraged ethnic rivalries to increase their profits, pitting Italians against Irish or Jews and whites against African Americans (Levine, 1992; Mangione and Morreale, 1992). Eventually, Italian Americans graduated from boxing into baseball and football. Jewish Americans found that sports lessened the shock of assimilation and gave them an opportunity to refute stereotypes about their physical weaknesses and to counter anti-Semitic charges that they were “unfit to become Americans” (Levine, 1992: 272). Today, assimilation is so complete that less attention is paid to the origins of white ethnic athletes as a whole, but bias is targeted more specifically toward individuals based on their perceived individual racial, ethnic or religious characteristics.

Asian Americans

Recent research has found that the approximately 22.2 million Asian Americans living in the United States have the highest median income (\$87,194) and the most formal education of any racial or ethnic group in the United States. However, significant differences exist among the largest Asian groups in regard to income, education level, and other key characteristics. Asian Americans are the fastest-growing major racial or ethnic group in this country (Budiman, Cilluffo, and Ruiz, 2019).

The U.S. Census Bureau uses the term *Asian* to designate the many diverse groups with roots in Asia. Chinese and Japanese immigrants were among the earliest



AP Images/Uncredited

Today, many Asians of Chinese descent reside in large urban enclaves such as New York City, Los Angeles, San Francisco, San Jose, and Boston. As a group, Asian Americans have enjoyed considerable upward mobility, and Chinese Americans are no exception. Many have become highly successful professionals, business entrepreneurs, and software developers. However, other Chinese Americans, particularly more recently arrived immigrants, remain in the lower tier of the working class—providing low-wage labor in personal services, repair, and maintenance. In recent years, many of these jobs have been taken over by other Asian Americans including Bhutanese and Burmese, categories that had the highest poverty rates among all Asian origin groups at more than twice the national average (Budiman et al., 2019).

FIGURE 9.13 For more than a century, boxing matches have provided members of some white ethnic groups with the ability to earn a living and develop a strong feeling of ethnic pride. Italian American Ray “Boom Boom” Mancini (right) was later inducted into the International Boxing Hall of Fame.

Asian Americans. Many Filipinos, Asian Indians, Koreans, Vietnamese, Cambodians, Pakistani, and Indonesians have arrived more recently. In this section we look at some of the categories that have been in the United States the longest and/or have the largest population groups in the 2020s.

Chinese Americans Chinese Americans (approximately 3.5 million) are the largest group at 23 percent of all Asian Americans in the United States. The initial wave of Chinese immigration occurred between 1850 and 1880, when more than 200,000 Chinese men were “pushed” from China by harsh economic conditions and “pulled” to the United States by the promise of gold in California and employment opportunities in the construction of transcontinental railroads. Far fewer Chinese women immigrated; however, many were brought to the United States against their will, and some were forced into prostitution.

Chinese Americans were subjected to extreme prejudice and stereotyped as “coolies,” “heathens,” and “Chinks.” Some Asians were attacked and even lynched by working-class whites who feared that they would lose their jobs to these immigrants. Passage of the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 brought Chinese immigration to a halt. The Exclusion Act was not repealed until World War II, when Chinese Americans who were contributing to the war effort by working in defense plants pushed for its repeal. After immigration laws were further relaxed in the 1960s, the second and largest wave of Chinese immigration occurred, with immigrants coming primarily from Hong Kong and Taiwan. These recent immigrants have had more education and workplace skills than earlier arrivals, and they brought families and capital with them to pursue the American Dream.

Filipino Americans Today, Filipino Americans constitute the second or third largest category of Asian Americans, depending on whether demographers are measuring individuals reporting that they

are Filipino alone or in combination with one or more additional racial-ethnic categories. U.S. Census Data for 2018 placed the Filipino population in the United States at nearly 4.4 million with a population increase of more than 52,000 people from the 2017 data (usainquirer.net, 2019).

To understand the status of Filipino Americans, it is important to look at the complex relationship between the Philippine Islands and the U.S. government. After Spain lost the Spanish-American War, the United States established colonial rule over the islands, a rule that lasted from 1898 until 1946. Despite control by the United States, Filipinos were not granted U.S. citizenship, but male Filipinos were allowed to migrate to Hawaii and the U.S. mainland to work in agriculture and in fish canneries in Seattle and Alaska. Like other Asian Americans, Filipino Americans were accused of taking jobs away from white workers and suppressing wages, and Congress restricted Filipino immigration to fifty people per year between the Great Depression and the aftermath of World War II.

The second wave of Filipino immigrants came following the Immigration Act of 1965, when large numbers of physicians, nurses, technical workers, and other professionals moved to the U.S. mainland. Most Filipinos have not had the startup capital necessary to open their own businesses, and many have been employed in the low-wage sector of the service economy. However, the average household income of Filipino American families is relatively high because, among other reasons, Filipinos have one of the highest levels of educational attainment among Asian Americans.

The largest numbers of Filipino Americans in the 2020s live in California (primarily in Los Angeles, San Francisco, and San Diego), Hawaii (Honolulu), Texas, Nevada, Washington, Florida, Illinois, New Jersey, and New York (Frey, 2018; usainquirer.net, 2019).

Asian Indian Americans Asian Indian Americans (also known as Indian Americans or Indo Americans) trace their origins to India and make up 19 percent of all Asian Americans in the U.S. population. About 4.4 million people count themselves as “Asian Indian” or Asian Indian in some combination with other groups in periodic U.S. Census Bureau surveys.

Some of the earliest Asian Indian immigrants arrived on the West Coast in the 1900s to work in agriculture, but it was not until the 1960s that their population increased significantly. Initially, Asian Indians were classified as Caucasian and allowed to become citizens, but they were later barred from citizenship. It was not until the 1950s that legislation was passed to lift this restriction, bringing several waves of immigration. Among the first to arrive were well-educated professionals and managers and their families. Later groups were less well educated and found jobs in the service industry, such as driving taxis, working in fast food, or opening small family-owned businesses such as restaurants.

Since the 1980s, many Asian Indian Americans have been in top positions in the high-tech Silicon Valley of California, particularly in companies such as Google and Microsoft. The largest populations of Asian Indian Americans are found in New York City, Washington, D.C., Los Angeles, and the San Francisco Bay Area (Frey, 2018).

The median household income of Asian Indian Americans (over \$100,000) is higher than that of Asian Americans as a whole. Asian Indian Americans have a higher level of educational attainment than other groups in the United States. Among Asian Indian Americans, 32 percent of adults age twenty-five and older have a bachelor's degree. Of Asian Americans as a whole, 29 percent hold a bachelor's degree, as compared to 18 percent of the U.S. population. Similarly, 38 percent of Asian Indian Americans hold advanced degrees, as compared to 20 percent of Asian Americans as a whole and 10 percent of the U.S. population as a whole (Budiman et al., 2019) (■Figure 9.14).

Asian Indian Americans have experienced hostility and discrimination in some areas of the country, at least partly because of their perceived success and the fear that they



FIGURE 9.14 Asian American workers, such as these software engineers, now make up a larger percentage of the high-tech workforce than white Americans and persons in other racial or ethnic categories. This change constitutes a dramatic shift in technology-related jobs and the corresponding distribution of higher wages and benefits provided by this employment sector.

are taking opportunities away from native-born Americans. Others were discriminated against in the workplace because U.S. workers believed that they were losing their jobs to outsourcing in countries such as India. Some Asian Indian American students have taken legal action against a number of Ivy League universities, claiming that they were the victims of discrimination because the schools did not want an overrepresentation of Asian Americans in their student population.

Indochinese Americans Indochinese Americans include people from Vietnam, Cambodia, Thailand, and Laos. Vietnamese refugees who had the resources to flee at the beginning of the Vietnam War were the first to arrive. The next to arrive were Cambodians and lowland Laotians, referred to as “boat people” by the media. Many who tried to immigrate did not survive at sea; others were turned back when they reached this country or were kept in refugee camps for long periods of time. When they arrived in the United States, inflation was high, the country was in a recession, and many native-born citizens feared that they would lose their jobs to these new refugees, who were willing to work very hard for low wages.

In 2019 it was estimated by the U.S. Census Bureau that about 2.1 million Vietnamese Americans resided in the United States (AsAmNews, 2019). Many Vietnamese Americans are first-, second-, or third-generation residents

of this country. Like Vietnamese Americans, other Indochinese Americans from Cambodia, Thailand, and Laos frequently have resided in the United States for one, two, or three generations, with about half of their population living in the western states, especially California. Even though most first-generation Indochinese immigrants spoke no English when they arrived in this country, their children and grandchildren have done very well in school and have been stereotyped as “brains.”

Korean Americans Male workers primarily made up the first wave of Korean immigrants who arrived in Hawaii between 1903 and 1910. The second wave came to the U.S. mainland following the Korean War in 1954. This cohort was made up primarily of the wives of servicemen and Korean children who had lost their parents during the war. The third wave arrived after the Immigration Act of 1965 permitted well-educated professionals to migrate to the United States. In the past, Korean Americans have helped one another open small businesses by pooling money through the *kye*—an association that grants members money on a rotating basis to gain access to more capital. In contemporary America, more than half of Korean Americans are employed in management, business, science, and arts occupations. The median household income of Korean immigrant households was about \$65,000 in 2017, and most Korean immigrants were naturalized U.S. citizens (Migration Policy Institute, 2019b).

Today, an estimated 1.9 million Korean Americans reside in the United States, constituting the fifth-largest category of Asian Americans and about 10 percent of the total adult Asian population in the nation. Many Korean Americans live in California (Los Angeles–Long Beach–Anaheim, San Francisco, and San Diego), New York City, New Jersey, Washington, D.C., Seattle, Chicago, Atlanta, and Dallas–Fort Worth. The median annual household income for Korean Americans is slightly above \$50,000, which is lower than the median for Asian Americans but slightly



VisionsofAmerica/Joe Solmi/Getty Images

FIGURE 9.15 During World War II, nearly 120,000 Japanese Americans—some of whom are still alive today—were interned in camps such as the Manzanar Relocation Center in California, where this statue memorializes their ordeal.

higher than for the U.S. population as a whole (Migration Policy Institute, 2019b).

Japanese Americans In the twenty-first century, fewer Japanese immigrants have arrived in the United States compared with other Asian groups. Only 27 percent of immigrants in 2018 were Japanese American, and nearly two-thirds (64 percent) of them had been in the country for more than ten years. But this was not always the case. In the 1860s, most early Japanese immigrants were men who worked on sugar plantations in the Hawaiian Islands. Many Japanese American workers were viewed as a threat by white workers, and immigration of Japanese men was curbed in 1908. However, Japanese women were permitted to enter the United States for several years thereafter because of the shortage of women on the West Coast. Although some Japanese women married white men, laws prohibiting interracial marriage stopped this practice.

With the exception of the forced migration and genocide experienced by Native Americans and the enslavement of African Americans, Japanese Americans experienced one of the most vicious forms of discrimination ever sanctioned by U.S. laws. During World War II, when the United States was at war with Japan, nearly 120,000 Japanese Americans were placed in internment camps, where they remained for more than two years despite the total lack of evidence that they posed a security threat to this country (■ Figure 9.15). This action was a direct violation of the citizenship rights of many *Nisei* (second-generation Japanese Americans), who were born in the United States. Only Japanese Americans were singled out for such harsh treatment; German Americans avoided this fate even though the United States was also at war with Germany. Four decades later, the U.S. government issued an apology for its actions and eventually paid \$20,000 each to some of those who had been placed in internment camps.

Since World War II, many Japanese Americans have been very successful. The annual household income of Japanese Americans is about \$74,000, which is higher than

the median household income of U.S. households (\$63,179). Many Japanese Americans (and other Asian Americans as well) reside in states with higher incomes and higher costs of living than the national average. These include Honolulu, Los Angeles, New York City, San Francisco, and Seattle (Frey, 2018).

Japanese Americans have been outstanding participants in various Olympic events in the twenty-first century. Included in their number have been Hailey Langland (snowboarding); Mirai Nagasu, Nathan Chen, and Vincent Zhou (figure skaters); and Aaron Tran and Thomas Hong (speedskaters).

Asian Americans and Sports As noted above, Asian American athletes have begun to receive recognition in a variety of sports, winning acclaim in the Olympics. Other well-known athletes include Kyla Ross (gymnastics), Nathan Adrian (swimming), Jeremy Lin (basketball), Nonito Donaire (boxing), Julie Chu (ice hockey), Ed Wang (football), and Ichiro Suzuki and Tim Lincecum (baseball). These and a number of other Asian Americans continue to be recognized as top athletes. Sports analysts have pointed out the importance of having outstanding Asian American athletes because they provide role models for all young people, but especially for their own communities, exemplifying the integrity, discipline, and hard work that are necessary to become a success in sports and in life.

Latinx (Hispanic Americans)

The term *Latinx* has replaced the terms *Latino* (for males) and *Latina* (for females) in media and other popular culture discussions of *Hispanics*. These terms are used interchangeably to refer to people who trace their origins to Spanish-speaking Latin America and the Iberian Peninsula. However, as racial-ethnic scholars have pointed out, the label *Hispanic* was first used by the U.S. government to designate people of Latin American and Spanish descent living in the United States, and it has not been fully accepted as a source of identity by the nearly 60 million Latinx who live in the United States today (Krogstad and Noe-Bustamante, 2019). Instead, many of the people who trace their roots to Spanish-speaking countries think of themselves as Mexican Americans, Chicanos/as, Puerto Ricans, Cuban Americans, Salvadorans, Guatemalans, Nicaraguans, Costa Ricans, Argentines, Hondurans, Dominicans, or members of other categories. Many also think of themselves as having a combination of Spanish, African, and Native American ancestry. The U.S. Hispanic population is the second-fastest-growing racial or ethnic group in the nation after Asian Americans, and Hispanics now make up more than 18 percent of the total U.S. population (Krogstad and Noe-Bustamante, 2019).

Across all Hispanic categories, more than 70 percent of all Latinx ages five and older in the United States speak English proficiently. Among more recent Latinx immigrants, only 36 percent spoke English proficiently in 2017. More than half of all Latinx reside in only three states: California,

Texas, and Florida. Hispanic households have lower median household incomes (\$51,450) and higher rates of poverty (17.6 percent) than white (non-Hispanic) Americans (\$70,642; 8.1 percent).

Mexican Americans or Chicanos/as Mexican Americans—including both native-born and foreign-born people of Mexican origin—are the largest segment (slightly over 60 percent) at 36.6 million of the entire Latinx population in the United States. Most Mexican Americans live in the southwestern region of the United States, including Los Angeles and Riverside, California; Houston and Dallas, Texas; Chicago; and various cities in Arizona.

Immigration from Mexico is the primary vehicle by which the Mexican American population grew in this country. Initially, Mexican-origin workers came to work in agriculture, where they were viewed as a readily available cheap and seasonal labor force. Many initially entered the United States as undocumented workers (“illegal aliens”); however, they were more vulnerable to deportation than other illegal immigrants because of their visibility and the proximity of their country of origin. For more than a century, there had been a “revolving door” between the United States and Mexico that has been open when workers were needed and closed during periods of economic recession and high rates of U.S. unemployment. However, Trump administration policies following 2016 made every effort to close that open door and, in the view of some, to punish individuals and families who sought to enter the United States to work and live for the improvement of their quality of life.

Many stereotypes have been directed at Mexican Americans, who have long been seen as a source of cheap labor, while at the same time they have been stereotyped as lazy and unwilling to work. As has been true of other groups, when white workers viewed Mexican Americans as a threat to their jobs, they demanded that the “illegal aliens” be sent back to Mexico. Consequently, U.S. citizens who happen to be Mexican American have been asked for proof of their citizenship, especially when anti-immigration sentiments are running high. Many Mexican American families have lived in the United States for five or six generations—they have fought in wars, made educational and political gains, and consider themselves to be solid U.S. citizens. Thus, it is a great source of frustration for them to be viewed as illegal immigrants or to be asked “How long have you been in this country?”

Recent controversies in the 2016 presidential campaign about the effects of immigration from Mexico and Central American countries to the United States contributed to an increase in prejudicial public comments by candidates for elected office and by more persons in the general public. It remains to be seen how these controversies will play out in future elections and ongoing political discourse.

Puerto Ricans In the second decade of the twenty-first century, nearly 5.0 million Puerto Rican Americans resided in the United States and accounted for 9.5 percent of the Hispanic population. Puerto Ricans are U.S. citizens at birth.

When Puerto Rico became a territory of the United States in 1917, Puerto Ricans acquired U.S. citizenship and gained the right to move freely to and from the mainland. In the 1950s, many migrated to the mainland when the Puerto Rican sugar industry collapsed and they settled in New York and New Jersey. Today, more than half of all Puerto Rican Americans reside in the Northeast (New York City, Philadelphia, and Chicago) or the South (primarily Orlando, Miami, and other Florida cities).

Between 2010 and 2015, many island-born Puerto Ricans left for the U.S. mainland, causing the largest migration in more than fifty years (Krogstad, 2016). More than 40,000 people left San Juan, Puerto Rico's capital, and most persons indicated that economic opportunity was the reason for their move to the U.S. mainland. Other reasons included being reunited with other family members, housing, and retirement (Krogstad, 2016).

In 2017, the island of Puerto Rico was devastated by Hurricane Maria, creating a humanitarian crisis for its 3.4 million residents. As an island territory of the United States, it has the highest rate of poverty of any U.S. state or territory and an unemployment rate double the national average on the mainland. Although most Puerto Ricans remained there following this natural disaster and tried to restore their homes and businesses, many fled to the United States to live with family or friends until the island could recover electricity and other necessities of life. Some of these families are now residents of the mainland; others returned to Puerto Rico to try to resume a normal life (Mercy Corps, 2019).

Although living conditions have improved substantially for some Puerto Ricans on the mainland, life has been difficult for those who live in poverty (estimated to be as high as 30 percent of all Puerto Ricans). Nevertheless, Puerto Ricans have made dramatic advances in education, the arts, and politics. They have higher levels of educational attainment than the Hispanic population overall, but lower levels than those of the U.S. population as a whole.

Cuban Americans

An estimated 2.3 million Hispanics of Cuban origin live in the United States. This figure includes both immigrants from Cuba and persons who trace their family ancestry to Cuba (Noe-Bustamante, Flores, and Shah, 2019). As the third-largest population of Hispanic origin living in the United States, Cuban Americans live primarily in the Southeast (78 percent), especially Florida (68 percent). The Cuban American population has continued to grow in the twenty-first century to the extent that this group now accounts for about 4 percent of the entire Hispanic population in this country. Today, about 56 percent of Cuban Americans are foreign-born.

Overall, this group has fared somewhat better than other Latinx because many early-arriving Cuban immigrants (in the late 1950s and 1960s) were affluent professionals and businesspeople who fled Cuba after Fidel Castro's 1959 revolution. This wave of Cuban immigrants

has median incomes above those of other Latinx but still below the U.S. national average. The second wave of Cuban Americans, arriving in the 1970s, initially fared worse. Many had been released from prisons and mental hospitals in Cuba, and their arrival fueled an upsurge in prejudice against all Cuban Americans. The more recent arrivals in the twenty-first century are upwardly mobile with occupations such as professionals or entrepreneurs who have moved beyond ethnic enclaves in locations such as Miami's Little Havana, established for economic and social survival by members of earlier generations.

When the Obama administration announced a loosening of trade embargos and the normalization of relations with Cuba (known as "the Cuban Thaw") in December 2014, there was a 78 percent increase in the number (43,159) of Cubans entering the United States in 2015. The United States reopened its embassy in Havana. Cubans sought to immigrate to the United States through the Cuban Adjustment Act of 1966, which required that they only needed to show up at a port of entry, pass background criminal and immigration history checks, and apply for legal permanent residence after they have been in the United States for one year (Krogstad, 2015). With immigration and travel restrictions lifted, the movement between people in the United States and Cuba became more flexible over the next few years. However, in 2019 the Trump administration announced that it was going to roll back parts of the prior administration's opening in relations by applying sanctions such as restricting travel and business relations between the U.S. and Cuba in order to end Cuba's repressive government. Many analysts believe that those most hard-hit by these sanctions are the everyday people of Cuba who have already lived under a repressive regime for more than fifty years (Sabatini, 2019).

Latinx and Sports For more than a century, Latinx have played Major League Baseball in the United States (■ Figure 9.16). Originally, Cubans, Puerto Ricans, and Venezuelans were selected for their light skin as well as for their skill as players. Baseball became a major means of assimilation for earlier Latinx in the United States. Latinx represented nearly one-third of Major League Baseball players, and growing numbers also participated in football, hockey, and basketball at all levels of competition. In women's sports, golf, soccer, and basketball also had rising numbers of Latinx athletes. Latinx also made impressive gains in Major League Soccer; however, some people are less enthusiastic soccer fans than football enthusiasts. Consequently, salaries of professional soccer players are lower than in the high-profile sports, fan bases are smaller, and revenues from sales of team clothing are not as lucrative. However, U.S. and Canadian soccer teams provide opportunities for some Latinx athletes to be visible in professional sports, particularly in regions with large Latinx populations. In other college and professional sports, few Latinx players are recruited by the top teams even in regions where the talent pool for sports consists of over



FIGURE 9.16 Professional sports, particularly baseball, increasingly reflects the growing racial-ethnic and national diversity of the U.S. population.

50 percent Latinx students. According to some analysts, this lack of representation is based on the physical size of Latinx players as compared with players from other racial and ethnic backgrounds. However, others argue that this is a cultural and political backlash for being of Hispanic descent, particularly Mexican, where old prejudices among dominant group members remain strong (Vasquez, 2019).

Middle Eastern Americans and North African Americans

Since 1970, many immigrants have arrived in the United States from countries located in the “Middle East,” which is the geographic region from Afghanistan to Libya that includes Arabia, Cyprus, and Asiatic Turkey as well as “North Africa.” This category is often referred to as MENA. Placing people in “Middle Eastern” American or “North African American” categories is somewhat like placing wide diversities of people in the categories of Asian American or Latinx. Some U.S. residents in these categories trace their origins to countries such as Iraq, Lebanon, Saudi

Arabia, Syria, Jordan, Yemen, or Kuwait while others claim roots in Egypt, Morocco, Sudan, and other North Africa nations (Cumoletti and Batalova, 2018). The U.S. Census Bureau further blurs distinctions among these various categories because the only options respondents of census reports have for indicating their race are white, black, Asian, American Indian/Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander. For that reason, many persons who trace their origins to the Middle East or North Africa indicate that they are “white” (Cumoletti and Batalova, 2018.; Gedeon, 2019; Parvini and Simani, 2019). However, as Omar Masry, a person working to modify the U.S. Census Bureau categories in the future, stated, “In the Arab community, there are varying degrees of assimilation. They are categorized as white, but they aren’t treated the same as the white guy in front of them in line when they are in an immigration line [at the airport] coming back from a trip” (qtd. in Parvini and Simani, 2019).

The Arab American population is estimated at over two million people today. Estimates also suggest that about 1.2 million immigrants from the Middle East and North Africa reside in the United States. Humanitarian migration from countries that have been torn apart by war, such as Syria and Yemen, and U.S. policies allowing family reunification account for many newer arrivals in the United States. In 2017, the Trump administration barred the entry of nationals from several Muslim-majority countries and temporarily suspended resettlement of refugees. Although part of this executive order has been modified, overall it has had the effect of reducing the number of new refugees admitted to this country annually (Cumoletti and Batalova, 2018).

Middle Eastern Americans speak a variety of languages and have diverse religious backgrounds. More recent immigrants typically speak either Arabic or Near East Arabic dialect. Some speak English only while others primarily speak French or Armenian. In regard to religion, some identify as Muslim, some as Coptic Christian, and still others as Melkite Catholic. In the Iranian American community, for example, there are many Jews, Muslims, Zoroastrians, and others with diverse views primarily tied to Iranian culture (Taxin, 2019).

Although some Middle Eastern Americans are from working-class families, Lebanese Americans, Syrian Americans, Iranian Americans, and Kuwaiti Americans primarily come from middle- and upper-income family backgrounds. For example, numerous Iranian Americans are scientists, professionals such as physicians, and entrepreneurs (Taxin, 2019).

Arab Americans In the twenty-first century, Arab Americans live throughout the United States, but about 94 percent live in metropolitan areas. Most reside in Detroit,

Los Angeles, Chicago, and Washington, D.C. There are also large number of Arab Americans in Florida, Texas, New Jersey, Ohio, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, and Virginia (Arab American Institute Foundation, 2018). In the second decade of the twenty-first century, most Arab Americans were born in the United States, and over 80 percent are U.S. citizens.

Perhaps the issue of lack of representation on U.S. Census Bureau forms will bring about change in the visibility of this category in the future. Although the federal government considered allowing those of Middle Eastern and North African descent to identify as such on the 2020 census, this change was not enacted in time. If this change had occurred, it might have resolved the issue of Arab Americans being classified as “white” or “other” on the census and could have provided a more accurate count. It might also have increased their influence among political leaders and the general public (Parvini and Simani, 2019).

Iranian (Persian) Americans Estimates vary widely (between 500,000 and 1 million) regarding the number of Iranian Americans who live in the United States. As previously stated, no official statistics are available because these data are not collected by the Census Bureau. Instead, the annual American Community Survey, a sample survey, asks questions of ancestry that provide this information, and various nongovernmental organizations sometimes collect this data as well.

The terms *Iranian American* and *Persian American* are used interchangeably because Iran was called Persia prior to 1935. Many Iranian Americans refer to themselves as “Persian” rather than “Iranian” because of the perceived negativity associated with the political history of the country of Iran and its relationship to the United States. It should be noted that Persian Americans are not considered to be Arab because they speak Farsi and have a different culture.

The most extensive immigration of Iranians to the United States began in the late 1970s and early 1980s, when early immigrants, particularly college students, left Iran as the Iranian revolution was taking place. When the Islamic Republic was established after the revolution, many Iranian students decided to remain in the United States, and other Iranians also left their country and established a new life in this nation. Today, the United States has the highest number of Iranian residents outside of Iran. More than 80 percent of Iranian Americans are U.S. citizens. Many Iranian Americans have high levels of educational attainment and are employed in professional positions in business, academia, and science. In 2019, Iranian students coming to the United States for graduate education at U.S. universities, primarily in California, had their visas cancelled and were barred from their flights to the United States. Because of complex political battles between the



David Grossman/Alamy Stock Photo

FIGURE 9.17 Adult Muslim women in the United States often wear traditional attire even though they may face prejudice and/or discrimination as they go about their daily lives. Some younger Muslim women prefer contemporary attire that does not readily identify them with being part of the Muslim community. Shown here are persons who reside in a Bangladesh enclave in Brooklyn, New York.

United states and Iran, most Iranians cannot obtain visas to travel to the United States, and it remains to be seen how this issue is finally resolved. For more recent information, check the Internet for the latest information on what kinds of political dissention and/or agreements have been reached more recently.

Discrimination As the examples above indicate, despite high levels of achievement, many Iranian Americans, like Arab Americans, have experienced persistent discrimination, particularly if they are Muslim (■ Figure 9.17) or if there has been a recent terrorist scare or attack in the United States. Following the September 11, 2001, attacks on the United States by terrorists whose origins were traced to the Middle East, there was an

escalation in the number of hate crimes and other types of discrimination against persons assumed to be Arabs, Arab Americans, Iranian Americans, or Muslims. In the aftermath of this terrorist attack, the U.S. Patriot Act was passed. This law gave the federal government greater authority to engage in searches and surveillance of persons suspected of terrorist activity than in the past. The Patriot Act caused heightened concern among many individuals and groups because it was believed that this law might be used to target individuals who appear to be of Middle Eastern origins.

In 2015, when parts of the Patriot Act expired, Congress passed the USA Freedom Act to restore various provisions of the original Patriot Act. Using roving wiretaps and tracking lone-wolf terrorists are allowed under the USA Freedom Act. The effect that these laws and various surveillance activities have had on Middle Eastern Americans is unknown. However, in the final years of the Obama administration and in the aftermath of the Paris, San Bernardino (CA), and Orlando (FL) terrorist attacks in late 2015, U.S. officials warned employers to protect Muslim rights and directed individuals who believed they were the objects of workplace discrimination based on being considered “Muslim” and “Middle Eastern” to file complaints with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (Judicial Watch, 2016). During the Trump Administration, severe attacks on the immigration system have occurred. Immigration and Custom Enforcement (ICE) raids across the country have terrified immigrant workers and refugees not only from Mexico and Central and South America but also from predominantly Muslim countries. Detention centers and active deportation policies were implemented, but there has also been a public outcry from many sectors about injustices associated with these new policies.

What about the Muslim experience in the United States? In cities across this country, Muslims have established social, economic, and ethnic enclaves for social stability and personal safety. Islamic schools and centers often bring together people from a diversity of countries such as Egypt and Pakistan. Many Muslim leaders and parents focus on how to raise children to be good Muslims and good U.S. citizens. In the second decade of the twenty-first century, some Middle Eastern Americans experience discrimination based on their speech patterns, appearance, and clothing (such as the *hijab*, or “head-to-toe covering” that leaves only the face exposed, which many girls and women wear). The idea that Middle Easterners are somehow associated with terrorism has also been difficult to remove from media representations and some people’s thinking, producing ongoing hardship for many upstanding citizens of this nation. Examples of the types of problems Muslims have encountered are hateful phone and online messages, threats of violence, actual physical attacks, and vandalism to mosques and Islamic centers. In 2019 alone, it was estimated that more than five hundred attacks occurred

on Muslims in the United States. Mosques in California, Connecticut, and Queens, New York, were among the targets of arson and graffiti.

Middle Eastern Americans and Sports One of the most popular sports among Arab Americans is soccer, followed by basketball. In the Arab World, basketball teams such as the Lebanese national team have consistently ranked high among all the teams in the world. North African soccer teams also have ranked high for a number of years.

One of the best-known Lebanese American basketball players and coaches is Steve Kerr, currently head coach of the Golden State Warriors. Other Arab Americans have done well in ice hockey (Brandon Saad and Justin Abdelkader). Finally, a Lebanese American athlete, Bobby Rahal, was a well-known professional race car driver before his retirement (Nahhas, 2016).

Over time, sports participation continues to increase among Middle Eastern American males. According to one journalist, “Despite the potential for discrimination, Arab Americans are still contributing to [the field of sport because it is] deeply embedded in Arab American culture and lifestyle, and all across the country, we can be found juggling soccer balls or shooting hoops” (Nahhas, 2016). However, Arab American girls and women are less likely to participate in highly visible athletic activities. Girls are more likely to be discouraged from playing soccer, for example, because of religious barriers, cultural norms, dress codes, and fear of harassment from other people (Atlantic Council, 2019).

Looking Ahead: The Future of Global Racial and Ethnic Inequality

Throughout the world, many racial and ethnic groups seek *self-determination*—the right to choose their own way of life. As many nations are currently structured, however, self-determination is impossible.

Worldwide Racial and Ethnic Struggles

The cost of self-determination is the loss of life and property in ethnic warfare. Ethnic violence has persisted in Mali, Myanmar, Bangladesh, India, China, South Sudan, and many other regions where hundreds of thousands have died from warfare, disease, and refugee migration. Ethnic wars have a high price even for survivors, whose life chances can become bleaker even after the violence subsides.

Much of this strife has been exacerbated by vast amounts of displacement of millions of refugees fleeing their countries of origin and seeking a safe home elsewhere, often without much success. Global discord has also been intensified by terrorist attacks by ISIS and other radical groups who kill innocent people of all ages and destroy historical and cultural icons that were treasured by millions around the world.

YOU CAN **Make a Difference**

Working for Racial and Gender Harmony on College Campuses

How can you promote racial and gender harmony on your college campus? Concerns about racial inequality, discrimination, and assault exist on all campuses. You can help by establishing an organization or website at your institution to determine how to best address this pressing problem and bring greater racial and gender harmony on campus. It is important to consider how the following factors contribute to the problem: (1) divisiveness between different cultural and ethnic communities; (2) persistent lack of trust; (3) the fact that many people never really communicate with one another, despite the omnipresence of social media; (4) the need to bring different voices into the curriculum and college life generally; and (5) the need to learn respect for people from different backgrounds. Consider these topics for developing questions on campus racism:

1. *Encouraging inclusion and acceptance.* Do members of my group reflect the college's racial and ethnic diversity? How much do I know about other people's history and culture? How can I become more tolerant—or accepting—of people who are different from me?
2. *Raising consciousness.* What is racism? What causes it? Can people participate in racist language and

behavior without realizing what they are doing? What is our college or university doing to reduce racism?

3. *Becoming more self-aware.* How much do I know about my own family roots and ethnic background? How do the families and communities where we grow up affect our perceptions of racial and ethnic relations?
4. *Using available resources.* What resources are available for learning more about working to reduce racism? Here are some agencies to contact:
 - The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU)
 - The Anti-Defamation League (ADL)
 - The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP)
 - The National Council of La Raza

What additional items would you add to the list of problem areas on your campus? Over time, students like you have changed many colleges and universities as a result of personal involvement in dealing with pressing social issues!

Growing Racial and Ethnic Diversity and Hostility in the United States

Racial and ethnic diversity is increasing in the United States. According to 2018 Census data, 60.4 percent of the U.S. population identifies as “white alone, not Hispanic or Latino.” Hispanic or Latino respondents accounted for 18.3 percent; black or African American for 13.4 percent; Asian for 5.9 percent; American Indian and Alaska Native for 1.3 percent; and Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islander for 0.2 percent. Persons indicating two or more races accounted for 2.7 percent of the population. It is predicted that by 2056, the roots of the average U.S. resident will be in Africa, Asia, Hispanic countries, the Pacific islands, and the Middle East—not white Europe.

What effect will these changes have on racial and ethnic relations? Several possibilities exist. On the one hand, conflicts may become more overt and confrontational as people continue to use *sincere fictions*—personal beliefs that reflect larger societal mythologies, such as “I am not a racist” or “I have never discriminated against anyone”—even when these are inaccurate perceptions (Feagin and Vera, 1995). Although the term *sincere fictions* was coined more than two decades ago, we face the real possibility in the future that interethnic tensions, as well as many

other forms of social tension, may increase as competition for scarce resources such as education, jobs, and valued goods in society continues to grow and the U.S. population continues to age.

On the other hand, there is reason for cautious optimism. Throughout U.S. history, members of diverse racial and ethnic groups have struggled to gain the freedom and rights that were previously withheld from them. Today, minority grassroots organizations are pressing for affordable housing, job training, and educational opportunities. As discussed in the “You Can Make a Difference” box, movements composed of both whites and people of color continue to oppose racism in everyday life, to seek to heal divisions among racial groups, and to teach children about racial tolerance. Many groups hope not only to affect their own microcosm but also to contribute to worldwide efforts to end racism.

To eliminate racial discrimination, it will be necessary to equalize opportunities in schools and workplaces. According to Omi and Winant (2013), it is important for us to be aware of race, rather than ignore it, if we wish to challenge the problem of racism. If we are aware that race as a social construction exists and has meaning in everyday life, we will gain the political insights necessary to mobilize ourselves and others against injustice and inequality in our society.

Demographer William H. Frey (2018: 260), who has conducted research on these issues for many years, has the following hopeful thought:

The foremost reason why I anticipate the integration of both new and old racial minorities into the nation's mainstream is the sheer force of the unprecedented change in the nation's racial demographics. As many more Americans experience day-to-day interactions with members of different racial groups, they will come to value their contributions as co-workers,

neighbors and family members. They will become more willing than ever before to support community, private-sector, and government efforts to foster those groups' interests. The diversity explosion that the country is now experiencing will alter all aspects of society in ways that can help the nation prosper, make it more inclusive, and increase its global connectivity.

Let us hope that Dr. Frey's predictions will become a reality in the twenty-first century.

Q&A Chapter Review

Use these questions and answers to check how well you've achieved the learning objectives set out at the beginning of this chapter.

LO1 How do race and ethnicity differ? What is the social significance of race and ethnicity?

A race is a category of people who have been singled out as inferior or superior, often on the basis of physical characteristics such as skin color, hair texture, or eye shape. An ethnic group is a collection of people distinguished primarily by cultural or national characteristics, including unique cultural traits, a sense of community, a feeling of ethnocentrism, ascribed membership, and territoriality. Race and ethnicity are significant in societies because how people identify themselves in regard to these terms drastically affects other people's lives, including what opportunities they have, how they are treated, and even how long they live.

LO2 How have racial and ethnic classifications changed over time in the United States?

Racial classifications in the United States have changed over the past century. If we look at U.S. Census Bureau classifications, for example, we can see how the meaning of race continues to change. First, race is defined by perceived skin color: white or nonwhite. Second, classifying people by racial categories created a sense of group membership for some people based on an arbitrary classification that they did not select for themselves. Third, these classifications caused many people to assume that racial purity actually exists when it does not. Over time, it finally became possible for people to identify themselves as being in more than one racial or ethnic category.

LO3 What are prejudice, stereotypes, racism, and discrimination?

Prejudice is a negative attitude often based on stereotypes, which are overgeneralizations about the appearance, behavior, or other characteristics of all members of a group. Stereotypes are overgeneralizations about the appearance, behavior, or other characteristics of members of particular categories. Racism is a set of attitudes, beliefs, and practices that is used to justify the superior treatment of one racial or ethnic group and the inferior

treatment of another racial or ethnic group. Discrimination involves actions or practices of dominant-group members that have a harmful effect on members of a subordinate group.

LO4 What are four major perspectives used by sociologists to describe racial and ethnic relations?

Symbolic interactionists claim that intergroup contact may either intensify or reduce racial and ethnic stereotyping and prejudice, depending on the context. In the contact hypothesis, symbolic interactionists point out that contact between people from divergent groups should lead to favorable attitudes and behavior when certain factors are present. *Functionalists* stress that members of subordinate groups become a part of the mainstream through assimilation, the process by which members of subordinate groups become absorbed into the dominant culture. *Conflict theorists* focus on economic stratification and access to power in race and ethnic relations. The caste perspective views inequality as a permanent feature of society, whereas class perspectives focus on the link between capitalism and racial exploitation. According to *racial formation theory*, the actions of the U.S. government substantially define racial and ethnic relations.

LO5 What are the unique historical experiences of Native Americans, Alaska Natives, and white Anglo-Saxon Protestants in the United States?

Experts estimate that approximately two million native inhabitants lived in North America in 1492; their numbers had been reduced to fewer than 240,000 by 1900. Native Americans have been the victims of genocide and forced migration. After the Revolutionary War, the federal government broke treaty after treaty as it engaged in a policy of wholesale removal of indigenous nations in order to clear the land for settlement by Anglo-Saxon "pioneers." Data continue to show that Native Americans are the most disadvantaged racial or ethnic group in the United States in terms of income, employment, housing, nutrition, and health.

Alaska Natives have experienced similar patterns of being relocated from their homes to government-designated areas, facing high rates of poverty, infant mortality, alcoholism and drug dependency, suicide, and lack of educational and work opportunities. Whereas Native Americans and Alaska Natives have been among the most disadvantaged peoples, white Anglo-Saxon Protestants (WASPs) have been the most privileged group in this country. Although many English settlers initially came to North America as indentured servants or as prisoners, they quickly emerged as the dominant group, creating a core culture (including language, laws, and holidays) to which all other groups were expected to adapt.

LO6 What experiences have uniquely affected African Americans and white ethnic Americans in the United States?

The African American (black) experience has been one uniquely marked by slavery, segregation, and persistent discrimination. Between 1619 and the 1860s, about 500,000 Africans were forcibly brought to North America, primarily to work on southern plantations, and these actions were justified by the devaluation and stereotyping of African Americans. Following the abolishment of slavery in 1863, African Americans were still subjected to segregation, discrimination, and lynchings. Despite civil rights legislation and economic and political gains by many African Americans, racial prejudice and discrimination continue to exist.

White ethnic Americans were the victims of prejudice and discrimination, particularly by white Anglo-Saxon Americans, based on their regions of origin, religions, negative stereotypes about their appearance and behavior patterns, and other biases. They were subjected to institutionalized discrimination, which made it difficult for them to find employment and educational opportunities.

LO7 What are the major categories of Asian Americans, and what are their historical and contemporary experiences?

The term *Asian Americans* designates the many diverse groups with roots in Asia. Chinese and Japanese immigrants

were among the earliest Asian Americans. Many Filipinos, Asian Indians, Koreans, Vietnamese, Cambodians, Pakistani, and Indonesians have arrived more recently. The subgroups are listed as Chinese Americans (the largest Asian American group), Japanese Americans, Korean Americans, Filipino Americans (the second-largest category of Asian Americans), and Indochinese Americans (which include people from Vietnam, Cambodia, Thailand, and Laos). Asian American immigrants as a group have enjoyed considerable upward mobility in U.S. society in recent decades, but many Asian Americans still struggle to survive by working at low-paying jobs and living in urban ethnic enclaves.

LO8 What have been the unique experiences of Latinx (Hispanics) and Middle Eastern Americans in the United States?

Mexican Americans—including both native-born and foreign-born people of Mexican origin—are the largest segment (approximately two-thirds) of the Latinx population in the United States. Today, Puerto Rican Americans make up 9 percent of Hispanic-origin people in the United States. Although some Latinx have made substantial political, economic, and professional gains in U.S. society, as a group they are nevertheless subjected to anti-immigration sentiments. Since 1970, many immigrants have arrived in the United States from countries located in the “Middle East,” which is the geographic region from Afghanistan to Libya that includes Arabia, Cyprus, and Asiatic Turkey. Middle Eastern immigrants to the United States speak a variety of languages and have diverse religious backgrounds. Because they generally come from middle-class backgrounds, they have made inroads into mainstream U.S. society. However, some Middle Eastern Americans experience discrimination based on their speech patterns, appearance, and clothing. The idea that Middle Easterners are somehow associated with terrorism has also been difficult to remove from media representations and some people’s thinking, which produces ongoing hardship for many upstanding citizens of this nation.

Key Terms

assimilation 254
authoritarian personality 250
discrimination 251
dominant group 248
ethnic group 246
ethnic pluralism 255
gendered racism 257

genocide 252
individual discrimination 252
institutional discrimination 253
internal colonialism 256
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race 246
racism 248

scapegoat 250
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subordinate group 248
theory of racial formation 257

Questions for **Critical Thinking**

- 1 Do you consider yourself defined more strongly by your race or by your ethnicity? How so?
- 2 Given that subordinate groups have some common experiences, why is there such deep conflict between some of these groups?
- 3 What would need to happen in the United States, both individually and institutionally, for a positive form of ethnic pluralism to flourish in the twenty-first century?

Answers to **Sociology Quiz**

Race, Ethnicity, and Sports

1	True	Many people continue to believe that differences in athletic abilities can largely be attributed to racial physiology (such as in the term “natural athlete”) rather than personal attributes such as “hard worker” or “good decision maker.”
2	False	This is an example of the “white men can’t jump” assumption that links racial differences to athletic ability; however, no “racial” gene has been found to account for differences in muscle fiber in black runners and white runners. (Human muscles contain a genetically determined mixture of both slow and fast fiber types. Fast-twitch fibers produce force at a higher rate for short bursts of speed and can be an asset to a short-distance sprinter. Slow-twitch fibers produce a lower rate of force that lasts longer and can be an asset to a distance runner.)
3	False	A person has a better chance of getting struck by lightning or writing a <i>New York Times</i> best-seller than becoming a professional athlete. For athletes playing on NCAA FBS Division 1 teams, here are a few percentages: Only 1.2 percent in men’s basketball, 0.9 percent in women’s basketball, and 1.6 percent in football will become professional athletes. The chances are a little better in men’s ice hockey (6.9 percent) and baseball (9.8 percent).
4	False	Although one or two more African American head coaches may be hired some years, there have remained only twelve or thirteen African American NCAA FBS head coaches for a number of years.
5	False	The latest figures available show that 85.4 percent of all FBS college and university presidents in 2018 were white men or women. Six African Americans, six Asian Americans, and six Latinx (Hispanic) men were presidents of FBS schools. At one time, all presidents of NCAA Division I schools were white (non-Hispanic) men.
6	True	In the 2018 season, among FBS football student-athletes, 54.3 percent were African American, as compared to white players at 39.8 percent, Asian American/Pacific Islanders at 2.8 percent, Latinx players at 2.3 percent, and “Other” at 0.9 percent.
7	False	Ninety percent (nine out of ten) of all FBS conference commissioners, who make major decisions about how their conferences are run, are white men, despite the relatively large number of student-athletes and coaches who are persons of color and/or women. One commissioner is a white woman.
8	False	Many children and young adolescents look upon college athletes as role models. When younger people see players who look like them, they may be more disposed to believe that they too could attend college and participate in sports.

Source: Based on Lapchick, 2019a.



Sex, Gender, and Sexuality

10

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- 1 Describe** sex as a biological dimension with emphasis on intersex persons, transgender persons, and individuals who are crossdressers.
- 2 Discuss** sexual orientation and LGBTQ population estimates in the United States.
- 3 Discuss** prejudice and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity.
- 4 Discuss** gender as a social and cultural construction and sexism as a form of discrimination.
- 5 Explain** the division of labor between women and men from historical and contemporary perspectives.
- 6 Describe** gender socialization and the primary agents of gender socialization.
- 7 Discuss** the prevalence of gender inequality in the United States.
- 8 Explain** the functionalist and neoclassical economic perspectives on gender stratification.
- 9 Compare** the conflict and feminist perspectives on gender stratification.
- 10 Discuss** the gender issues that will be in focus in the United States in the future.

SOCIOLOGY & **Everyday Life**

When Gender, Sexual Orientation, and Weight Bias Collide

“SeaWorld, Shamu Got Out!” (words yelled out a car window by a male passenger to Whitney Thore, the 380-pound TLC star of the series *My Big Fat Fabulous Life*, as she was walking down the street). In the words of Thore,

There’s PC terms for everything these days but fat people are fair game. Someone has to fight for us. . . . I’m Whitney Thore. . . . I’m a fat dancer. . . . I hate people thinking that I’m lazy. I have polycystic ovarian syndrome (that’s PCOS for short). It’s an endocrine disorder that does a lot to your body. Two-thirds of women with PCOS are overweight or obese. . . . It makes it really easy for me to gain weight and really difficult for me to lose weight. . . . When I put my fat dancing woman video on YouTube and it went viral, suddenly people were coming out of the woodwork thanking me for being myself and for showing them that they can do the same thing. Living with PCOS isn’t easy but I still have a choice in how I let it affect my attitude. I may be fat, but I am also fabulous. I have one life to live . . . and it sure better count!

—Whitney Way Thore (TLC Channel, 2015), who uploaded “A Fat Girl Dancing,” a video that went viral on YouTube, has become a sensation among some mainstream and social media fans. She created the “#NoBodyShame” campaign. However, her critics claim that she is promoting obesity.

I was once told that coming out as a gay man was like being welcomed into the best club in the world. It was maybe an overstatement, but I understand the



Alberto E. Rodriguez/Getty Images for Discovery Communications/Getty Images

Activists such as Whitney Way Thore (shown here) and Louis Peitzman (not pictured) call our attention to the fact that gender and sexual orientation do make a difference in how individuals labeled as overweight or obese are treated by others in their everyday lives. What examples of weight bias targeting specific categories of people have you observed in daily life?

Although the lived experiences of Whitney Way Thore and Louis Peitzman differ in many ways, one common theme emerges from their comments: One’s gender and sexual orientation do matter in how people treat individuals whom they believe are extremely overweight or obese. People—particularly women and gay men—who are weight challenged are fair game for the ridicule of those who perceive themselves as being of average body weight. Some of these individuals believe that they have the right to set the standards for everyone else. The intersectionality of gender and weight is not a new topic in the social sciences. Feminist analysts have called attention to the gendered nature of weight preoccupation, disordered eating, and discrimination against persons based on weight and physical appearance. Many studies focused on appearance pressures and harassment experienced

by heterosexual women. However, researchers have found that overweight and obese gay men have also had similar concerns because they live in a dominant culture that practices weight stigma and bias and because they are part of a gay male culture that is not “gay fat” friendly. If you search online for “gay fat,” you will come across this definition in *UrbanDictionary.com* (2019): “A gay man who does not have a gym-perfect body, but rather carries a body fat percentage in the 12%–20% range. A man who is considered gay fat within the community would likely be considered athletic, physically fit, and in-shape within the greater cultural context.” As gender studies scholar Jason Whitesel (2014: 2) concludes in his book *Fat Gay Men*, “Big gay men incur social wounds produced by the stigmas of their size and sexuality combined. As looks are one of the organizing features of the gay world, gay big men have an added exclusion that has not been

sentiment: When you first come out, you're automatically granted inclusion—if not by friends and family, then by the gay community as a whole. They get it. They get you. And they're eager to let you know that you're not alone, and that you have a seat at the table. Unless, of course, you're also fat, in which case, no, you can't sit with us.

—Louis Peitzman (2013), an editor for BuzzFeed News, calls attention to the issue of weight and gay men in his response to the slogan for the “It Gets Better” Project, a campaign that communicates to LGBT youth that things get better and encourages other people to help make things better

How Much Do You Know About Gender, Sexual Orientation, and Weight Bias?

TRUE	FALSE		
T	F	1	Both men and women are equally vulnerable to weight bias and discrimination in employment, education, health care, and interpersonal relationships.
T	F	2	Gender differences in weight bias and discrimination often differ by ethnicity.
T	F	3	Many young girls and women believe that being even slightly “overweight” makes them less “feminine.”
T	F	4	Physical attractiveness is a more central part of self-concept for women than for men.
T	F	5	Regardless of their sexual orientation, men have less concern than women about their weight and body image.
T	F	6	Thinness has always been the “ideal” body image for women.
T	F	7	The topic of eating disorders is more “taboo” among men than women because it is perceived to be a weakness associated with femininity.
T	F	8	The media play a significant role in shaping societal perceptions about the ideal weight for men and women and about body image.

Answers can be found at the end of the chapter.

fully explored.” In an attempt to overcome this stigma, some of the men join organizations such as Girth and Mirth to help them gain dignity and respect in spite of the shaming, desexualization, exclusion, and marginalization they experience from both mainstream and gay society (Whitesel, 2014).

Similarly, Whitney Thore of *My Big Fat, Fabulous Life* seeks to overcome the negative views of people who call her “lazy” by having an upbeat attitude and doing her “fat girl” dancing on YouTube and television shows. But the “gay big men” and Thore’s “fat girl” face a culture in which many people objectify other individuals by seeing them primarily in terms of their outward appearance and their perceived sexual attractiveness. This process is referred to as objectification.

What specifically is objectification? *Objectification* is the process whereby some people treat other individuals as if they were objects or things, not human beings. We objectify other individuals when we

judge them strictly on the basis of their physical appearance, rather than on their individual qualities, attributes, or actions (Hatton and Trautner, 2011). Objectification of girls and women is common in the United States and many other nations, and this problem is intensified when weight and appearance are also issues (see ■ Table 10.1). Studies have found more extensive objectification of gay males, when compared to heterosexual men, including negative evaluations of their physical appearance, weight, and sexuality. Gay men like Peitzman are scrutinized and objectified for being “gay fat” and thus are deemed less sexually desirable. In sum, all women and men are objectified and sexualized to some degree in society, but the process takes on numerous additional dimensions when sexual orientation and/or weight are also involved.

What does it mean to be “sexualized” or to go through the process of “sexualization”? According to the American Psychological Association

TABLE 10.1 The Objectification of Women

General Aspects of Objectification	Objectification Based on Cultural Preoccupation with “Looks”
Women are responded to primarily as “females,” whereas their personal qualities and accomplishments are of secondary importance.	Women are often seen as the objects of sexual attraction, not full human beings—for example, when they are stared at because of their physical characteristics.
Women are seen as “all alike.”	Women are seen by some as depersonalized body parts—for example, “a piece of ass.”
Women are seen as being subordinate and passive, so things can easily be “done to a woman”—for example, discrimination, harassment, and violence.	Depersonalized female sexuality is used for cultural and economic purposes—such as in the media, advertising, the fashion and cosmetics industries, and pornography.
Women are seen as easily ignored or trivialized.	Women are seen as being “decorative” and status-conferring objects to be bought (sometimes collected) and displayed by men and sometimes by other women.
Women are judged on appearance more than men are.	Women are evaluated according to prevailing, narrow “beauty” standards and often feel pressure to conform to appearance norms.

Source: Adapted from Schur, 1983.

(2010), **sexualization** is the act or processes whereby an individual or group is seen as sexual in nature or persons become aware of their sexuality. Both cognitive (mental processes of perception, judgment, and reason) and emotional consequences occur when persons are sexualized: (1) a person’s value comes only from his or her sexual appeal or sexual behavior, to the exclusion of other characteristics; (2) a person is held to a standard that equates physical attractiveness (narrowly defined) with being sexy; (3) a person is sexually objectified; and/or (4) sexuality is inappropriately imposed upon a person.

Why is this important for our study of sociology? The way that people think about themselves and others in regard to personal appearance and body image provides us with important information about the larger society’s cultural norms, expectations, and values in regard to females and males. This social construction of reality involves what we consider to be appropriate, or inappropriate, behavior for men and women. Obviously, some differences between men and women are biological in nature. However, many differences between the sexes are socially constructed. Studying sociology makes us aware of differences that relate to gender (a social concept) as well as differences that are based on a person’s biological makeup, or sex. In this chapter we examine the issue of gender: what it is and how it affects us. Before reading on, test your knowledge about gender, sexual orientation, and weight bias by taking the “Sociology and Everyday Life” quiz. ●

Sex: The Biological Dimension

Whereas the word *gender* is often used to refer to the distinctive qualities of men and women (masculinity and femininity) that are *culturally* created, **sex** refers to the biological and anatomical differences between females and males. At the core of these biological and anatomical differences is the chromosomal information transmitted at the moment a child is conceived. The mother contributes an X chromosome and the father either an X (which

produces a female embryo) or a Y (which produces a male embryo) chromosome. At birth, male and female infants are distinguished by **primary sex characteristics**: the genitalia used in the reproductive process. At puberty, an increased production of hormones results in the development of **secondary sex characteristics**: the physical traits (other than reproductive organs) that identify an individual’s sex. For women, these include larger breasts, wider hips, and narrower shoulders; a layer of fatty tissue throughout the body; and menstruation. For men, they include development of enlarged genitals, a deeper voice, greater height, a more muscular build, and more body and facial hair.

Intersex and Transgender Persons

Sex is not always clear-cut. An **intersex person** is an individual who is born with a reproductive or sexual anatomy that does not correspond to the typical definitions of male or female; in other words, the person’s sexual differentiation is ambiguous. Formerly referred to as *hermaphrodites* by some in the medical community, intersex persons may appear to be female on the outside at birth but have mostly male-type anatomy on the inside, or they may be born with genitals that appear to be in between the usual male and female types. For example, a chromosomally normal (XY) male may be born with a penis just one centimeter long and a urinary opening similar to that of a female. However, although intersexuality is considered to be an inborn condition, intersex anatomy is not always known or visible at birth. In fact, intersex anatomy sometimes does not become apparent until puberty, when an adult is found to be infertile, or when an autopsy is performed at death. It is possible for some intersex people to live and die with intersex anatomy but never know that the condition exists. According to the Intersex Society of North America (2015),

Intersex is a socially constructed category that reflects real biological variation. Nature presents us with sex anatomy spectrums, [but] nature doesn't decide where the category of "male" ends and the category of "intersex" begins, or where the category of "intersex" ends and the category of "female" begins. *Humans decide.* Humans (today, typically doctors) decide how small a penis has to be, or how unusual a combination of parts has to be, before it counts as intersex. Humans decide whether a person with XXY chromosomes and XY chromosomes and androgen insensitivity will count as intersex.

Some people may be genetically of one sex but have a gender identity of the other. That is true for a **transgender person**—an individual whose gender identity (self-identification as woman, man, neither, or both) does not match the person's assigned sex (identification by others as male, female, or intersex based on physical/genetic sex). Consequently, transgender persons may believe that they have the opposite gender identity from that of their sex organs and may be aware of this conflict between gender identity and physical sex as early as the preschool years. Some transgender individuals choose to take hormone treatments or have a sex change operation to alter their genitalia so that they can have a body congruent with their sense of gender identity (■ Figure 10.1). Many then go on to lead lives that they view as being compatible with their true gender identity. But the issue of hormonal and surgical sex reassignment remains highly politicized. The "Standards of Care," a set of guidelines set up by the Harry Benjamin International Gender Dysphoria Association, establishes standards by which transgender persons may obtain hormonal and surgical sex reassignment to help ensure that people choosing such options are informed about what is involved in a gender transition.

Western societies acknowledge the existence of only two sexes; some other societies recognize three—men, women, and *berdaches* (or *hijras* or *xaniths*): biological males who behave, dress, work, and are treated in most respects as women. The closest approximation of a third sex in Western societies is an individual who is a **crossdresser** (formerly known as a *transvestite*), a male who dresses as a woman or a female who dresses as a man but does not alter his or her genitalia. Although crossdressers are not treated as a third sex, they often "pass" for members of that sex because their appearance and mannerisms fall within the range of what is expected from members of the other sex. Most crossdressers are heterosexual men, many of whom are married, but gay men, lesbians, and straight women may also be crossdressers. Crossdressing can occur in conjunction with homosexuality, but this is frequently not the case. Researchers and analysts continue to engage



PacificCoastNews/Photoshot

FIGURE 10.1 Caitlyn Jenner (formerly known as Bruce Jenner) went through a very public gender transformation from male to female and became a spokesperson for transgender persons. What influence do you think high-profile people like Caitlyn Jenner have on the attitudes and actions of other people in regard to the LGBTQ community?

sexualization

the act or processes whereby an individual or group is seen as sexual in nature or persons become aware of their sexuality.

sex

the biological and anatomical differences between females and males.

primary sex characteristics

the genitalia used in the reproductive process.

secondary sex characteristics

the physical traits (other than reproductive organs) that identify an individual's sex.

intersex person

an individual who is born with a reproductive or sexual anatomy that does not correspond to the typical definitions of male or female; in other words, the person's sexual differentiation is ambiguous.

transgender person

an individual whose gender identity (self-identification as woman, man, neither, or both) does not match the person's assigned sex (identification by others as male, female, or intersex based on physical/genetic sex).

crossdresser

a male who dresses as a woman or a female who dresses as a man but does not alter his or her genitalia.

in dialogue about the correct terminology to use when referring to persons in the diverse groups that now make up this segment of the population.

Sexual Orientation

Sexual orientation refers to an individual's preference for emotional–sexual relationships with members of the different sex (heterosexuality), the same sex (homosexuality), or both (bisexuality). In referring to homosexuality, many organizations representing lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer persons have adopted the acronym *LGBTQ*. The term *lesbian* refers to females who prefer same-sex relationships; *gay* refers to males who prefer same-sex relationships. As noted above, *bisexual* is the term used to describe a person's physical or romantic attraction to both males and females, whereas *transgender* is a term applied to persons whose appearance, behavior, and/or gender identity does not match that individual's assigned sex. The “Q” in *LGBTQ* variously means “questioning” or “queer,” and sometimes the acronym is written *LGBTQQ* to include both “questioning” and “queer.” When the “Q” stands for “questioning,” it refers to a person who is uncertain about his or her sexual orientation. When the “Q” stands for “queer,” it is an umbrella term for the Queer Movement to indicate pride in one's sexual orientation and a rejection of the older, derogatory use of the word *queer* to disparage a nonheterosexual person's orientation.

What criteria have social scientists used to study sexual orientation? A definitive study of sexuality conducted by researchers at the University of Chicago established three criteria for identifying people as homosexual or bisexual: (1) *sexual attraction* to persons of one's own gender, (2) *sexual involvement* with one or more persons of one's own gender, and (3) *self-identification* as a gay, lesbian, or bisexual (Laumann et al., 1994). According to these criteria, then, having engaged in a homosexual act does not necessarily classify a person as homosexual. In fact, many respondents in the University of Chicago study indicated that although they had at least one homosexual encounter when they were younger, they were no longer involved in homosexual conduct and never identified themselves as gay, lesbian, or bisexual.

Measuring Sexual Orientation It is difficult to determine how many people identify as *LGBTQ* because of a lack of official statistics. A 2016 Gallup survey focused on this issue and asked respondents two questions. First, “What sex were you assigned at birth, on your original birth certificate?” with the response options of female and male. The second question asked, “Which of the following terms best describes your current gender identity?” Response options included “woman, man, trans woman (male-to-female), trans man (female-to-male), and non-binary/genderqueer.” People were categorized as transgender if their sex assigned at birth was different from their gender identity. This was true even if the respondent did not use the label “transgender”

to identify themselves. When these questions were used, 3.83 percent of the research population classified as *LGBT*. When the question was worded differently, a different percentage was found. In the second set of questions, focusing more specifically on sexual orientation, people were asked, “Which of the following do you consider yourself to be?” Possible responses were “straight or heterosexual, lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer or same-gender loving.” When the question was worded this way, 4.35 percent of the respondents classified themselves as *LGBT*. Overall, researchers have worked for several decades trying to come up with the best research questions to help determine an accurate estimated number and percentages of the adults in the *LGBTQ* population in the United States (Meyer, 2019).

Gallup researchers note that measuring sexual orientation and gender identity is difficult because of complex social and cultural patterns in the larger society that influence these measures. For example, because of a lingering social stigma attached to *LGBTQ* identity, some people are not forthcoming about their identity when asked to respond to a survey, causing an unknown number of individuals to be excluded from estimates of the *LGBTQ* population (Meyer, 2019).

LGBTQ Population Estimates More recent studies by the Gallup Daily Tracking survey were analyzed by the Williams Institute at the UCLA School of Law and enabled researchers to estimate that about 4.5 percent of the adult U.S. population, or approximately 11.3 million people, identified as *LGBT* in 2019. Respondents were asked the following question, “Do you personally identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender?” Among those who identified as *LGBT*, about 58 percent were female and 42 percent were male. White respondents accounted for about 58 percent of those who identified as *LGBT*, as compared to 21 percent Latinx, 12 percent black, and 5 percent as more than one race (Williams Institute, 2019). Age differences were also identified in the study: Persons who self-identified as *LGBT* were younger than other respondents. Only 23 percent who self-identified as *LGBT* were age fifty or older, while 56 percent of self-identifying *LGBT* adults were under age thirty-five (Trotta, 2019). According to Kerith Conron, research director at the Williams Institute, “Younger people are more likely to actually live as *LGBT* and to identify that way because they are growing up in a time when it's more acceptable to acknowledge those feelings and act on them” (qtd. in Trotta, 2019). How valid are estimates of the current *LGBTQ* population in the United States? Over time, the findings of Gallup and the Williams Institute remain relatively consistent, but the question of how to best inquire about sexual orientation and gender identity is far from over (Meyer, 2019).

What is interesting, however, is the extent to which the general U.S. population overestimates the number and percentage of *LGBTQ* persons in this country (McCarthy, 2019). According to one study, U.S. adults estimate that nearly one in four (23.6 percent) of all Americans are gay or lesbian. This estimate is more than five times what Gallup polls and

the Williams Institute have found in any of their studies. Some analysts suggest that this overestimation occurs because of the “outsized visibility” of the gay population. What they mean by this is that high visibility comes from the representation of LGBT characters on primetime television series and on streaming services such as Netflix, Hulu, Sling TV, HBO Now, Amazon Prime Video, and YouTube TV. Pride parades in major metropolitan areas and other forms of activism demanding social change beneficial to lesbians, gays, and transgender persons have also heightened the visibility of previously hidden members of the LGBTQ community. However, it is important to note that overestimation is not only an issue for the LGBTQ community: Researchers have found that U.S. people also overestimate the size of African American (black), Hispanic (Latinx), and recent immigrant populations in this country (McCarthy, 2019).

Discrimination Based on Sexual Orientation

The United States has seen numerous forms of discrimination based on sexual orientation. One of the most obvious issues was the fact that, throughout most of U.S. history, LGBTQ couples could not enter into legally recognized marital relationships.

Marriage, Property Rights, Parental Rights, and Adoption

Many states passed constitutional amendments that limited marriage to a union between a man and a woman, and in other states, legislators had passed statutes with similar language. Prior to the 2015 U.S. Supreme Court ruling in *Obergefell v. Hodges*, which legalized same-sex marriage across the United States, thirty-seven states had legalized same-sex marriage as a result of court decisions, state laws passed by legislatures, or popular vote. Now that the U.S. Supreme Court has struck down all state bans on same-sex marriage, legalizing it in all fifty states and requiring states to honor out-of-state same-sex marriage licenses, many other issues pertaining to inequalities based on sexual orientation remain to be resolved. Among these are marital property rights, the ability to adopt children, and equal access to benefits that had previously been provided only to persons in legal heterosexual marriages. Consider, for example, parental rights.

Parental rights remain an issue of grave concern to LGBTQ couples in a number of states. Among the ways in which persons in the LGBTQ community become parents are adoption, foster parenting, donor insemination, surrogacy, and having children from previous heterosexual relationships. Laws governing family relationships vary significantly from state to state. In some states, same-sex partners who want to adopt a child or are raising children together (typically from a previous heterosexual marriage) learn that only one partner is legally recognized as the child’s parent or guardian. The LGBTQ community has struggled to gain the same parental rights in regard to legal and physical custody of children as heterosexual couples, including the right to physical access or visitation with a child and various other rights pertaining to the property and well-being of a

child. If gay and lesbian couples are denied parental rights by law and in the courts of the land, they have little or no legal recourse and are unable to exert authority over their children’s lives, health care, or property.

The Trump administration further shifted foster care and adoption procedures by announcing that new proposed rules would allow adoption and foster care agencies funded by the Department of Health and Human Services to decline the applications of potential care providers who indicated they were LGBTQ. This was an effort to roll back regulations by the Obama administration that had prohibited DHHS grant recipients from discriminating on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity in foster care and adoption decisions. How this issue is resolved remains to be seen, but Vice President Mike Pence stated in 2019 that “Child welfare providers will never be forced to choose between their faith and serving those in need—not on our watch” (qtd. in Berg and Syed, 2019).

Housing Housing discrimination is another pressing problem in the LGBTQ community. Housing nondiscrimination laws protect LGBTQ persons from being unfairly evicted, denied housing, or refused the ability to rent or buy housing on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity. Some states do not provide housing protection, but municipalities may provide local-level nondiscrimination protections (Movement Advancement Project, 2019). These various housing provisions have been necessary previously because the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) declared in 2015 that the Fair Housing Act did not specifically include sexual orientation and gender identity as covered under housing nondiscrimination laws. For many years, housing discrimination against LGBTQ persons included real estate agents who refused to show lesbian or gay persons houses in “family-oriented” apartments, condo buildings, or neighborhoods. Some banks and finance and insurance companies treated same-sex couples differently from heterosexual prospective homebuyers or lessees. As of 2019, HUD interpreted the Fair Housing Act’s ban on sex-based discrimination to include discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity. Legal experts suggest that there remains a “patchwork of protections and multiple layers of law” that still contribute to housing discrimination, particularly in some cities and states. For example, 44 percent of the LGBTQ population is reported to live in states where there are no laws prohibiting housing discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity. Transgender persons are particularly harmed by discriminatory practices in housing. One study found that transgender respondents were more likely than others in the LGBTQ population to have experienced housing discrimination and possibly homelessness based on gender

sexual orientation

an individual’s preference for emotional-sexual relationships with members of the different sex (heterosexuality), the same sex (homosexuality), or both (bisexuality).

identity because of discriminatory practices of landlords, real estate agents, and others employed in the housing industry (Movement Advancement Project, 2019). Moreover, during the Trump administration, HUD announced that the department was going to rescind Obama administration protections that provided transgender individuals equal access to homeless shelters. Instead, federally funded shelters were given permission to apply their own religious, privacy, and safety concerns to “consider an individual’s sex” when making a determination about how and whether to accommodate a person seeking shelter (Berg and Syed, 2019).

Health Care Health care is another area of discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity. Although improvements have occurred in some areas of health-care delivery, LGBTQ persons are still turned away from some medical facilities or face overt discrimination when seeking medical treatment. Prior to the Affordable Care Act, many LGBTQ people were unable to afford the high cost of health insurance coverage, and some were unable to acquire employer-provided health insurance because they were not allowed by their partner’s employer to be counted as a dependent under the partner’s insurance plan. This remains true in some areas, but changes have been made in others as state laws and the political climate in some areas have changed. Prior to the Affordable Care Act, LGBTQ individuals were denied insurance on the basis of preexisting conditions such as HIV/AIDS. The health-care problem remains especially pronounced among transgender people, some of whom report that they have been refused care because of bias.

The Trump administration’s proposals in regard to health care might be summed up in the words of Roger Severino, Director of the Office of Civil Rights at DHHS in 2019: “We’re going back to the plain meaning of those terms, which is based on biological sex” (qtd. in Berg and Syed, 2019). As a result of this approach, efforts were made to eliminate Obama administration regulations prohibiting discrimination on the basis of sex stereotyping and gender identity in regard to federally funded health providers, programs, and insurers that previously had been required to abide by the nondiscrimination provision of the Affordable Care Act. This decision would affect Medicaid, private insurance, and education programs such as those for HIV/AIDS. Some of these changes have been blocked by federal judges, but at the time of this writing in 2019, many issues of nondiscrimination in health care have not been resolved (Berg and Syed, 2019).

Employment Occupational discrimination remains a pressing problem for people in the LGBTQ community. Despite Obama administration regulations prohibiting discrimination in employment on the basis of sexual orientation, openly LGBTQ people continue to experience bias in hiring, retention, and promotion in both public-sector and private-sector employment. Despite greater inclusion that has occurred in recent years, as greater acceptance of LGBTQ persons has been seen in society at large, Trump administration decisions about reversing the Justice Department’s position

that the Civil Rights Act protects transgender people from workplace discrimination have turned back the clock on greater inclusion of some potential employees and made the assumption that employers could legally discriminate in employment decisions on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity. Furthermore, the U.S. Department of Labor removed statements from its website that stated what workplace rights and resources should be provided for LGBTQ workers. As usual, it remains to be seen the extent to which actual compliance with these policies occurs. Will the workplace become more discriminatory and segregated or will places of employment become more diversified and accepting of the LGBTQ community (Berg and Syed, 2019)?

The Military Historically, one of the most widely publicized forms of discrimination against gays and lesbians has been in the military. The “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” policy implemented in 1993 by the Clinton administration required that officers not ask a serviceperson about his or her sexual orientation. Gays and lesbians were allowed to serve in the military as long as they did not reveal their orientation. However, various studies showed that this policy led to differential treatment of many gays and lesbians in the military. As many as 13,000 military personnel may have been discharged under this law, and gay rights organizations advocated for its repeal, arguing that the rules were discriminatory and that they kept gay troops from seeking medical care or reporting domestic abuse for fear of being exposed and expelled from their military branch. In 2010 President Barack Obama signed the repeal of the policy, thus allowing gay and lesbian Americans to serve openly in the armed forces. However, in 2017, President Donald J. Trump stated (by tweet) that he planned to ban transgender persons from military service. Over time, the Department of Defense established policies that stated existing transgender service members were eligible for waivers so that they could remain in the military; however, no new transgender persons would be considered for military employment (Berg and Syed, 2019). The most recent directives (in 2019) regarding sexual orientation and gender identity in the workplace directly contradicted promises by President Trump, made in the early days of his administration, that he would safeguard rules originally put in place by an executive order from President Obama during his term of office (Berg and Syed, 2019).

The Great Divide That Doesn’t Stop

Various organizations of gays, lesbians, and transgender persons have been unified in their desire to reduce discrimination and other forms of *homophobia*—extreme prejudice and sometimes discriminatory actions directed at gays, lesbians, bisexuals, transgender persons, and others who are perceived as not being heterosexual (■ Figure 10.2). Homophobia involves an aversion to LGBTQ people or their lifestyle or culture, and it sometimes includes behavior or an act, such as a hate crime, based on this aversion. Because of violence against LGBTQ



FIGURE 10.2 Activists annually march in LGBTQ Pride Parades through the world to show their support for the rights of all persons regardless of their sexual orientation. Shown here are participants in the annual New York Pride Parade.

individuals in the past, laws have been passed such as the Matthew Shepard and James Byrd Jr. Hate Crimes Prevention Act that attempt to prevent such crimes or to bring to justice those individuals who perpetrate such violent acts in the future.

Some of the more recently publicized forms of potential discrimination against the LGBTQ community in the aftermath of the U.S. Supreme Court decision legalizing same-sex marriage are the “religious freedom” or “religious liberty” bills that were passed by various states in 2015 and 2016. These laws allegedly were passed to protect religious freedom in for-profit businesses and corporations. For example, Mississippi passed a law in 2016 that allows businesses to refuse services to gay couples based on religious objections. The law is based on the belief that marriage should only be between a man and a woman and that sexual relations should occur only within heterosexual marriages. For this reason, establishments that provide services for weddings should not be required to provide goods, services, or facilities for a gay wedding due to religious or moral objections. Critics of these laws believe that they are a possible vehicle to promote discrimination against members of the LGBTQ community by allowing conservative Christian vendors to decline services to same-sex partners.

Access to public restrooms and other gendered facilities is another key issue. Other legislation has been introduced that asserts that anatomy and genetics are determined at birth and should be adhered to in use of public facilities. As a result, public schools and businesses should be free to determine who is allowed access to bathrooms, locker rooms, and dressing rooms. In response to state laws pertaining to transgender access to restrooms, the Obama administration issued a 2016 directive to every public school district in the United States to allow transgender students to use the bathrooms that match their gender identity. By 2017, President Trump

and the Department of Education issued a letter telling schools to disregard the previous directive, effectively removing the protections of transgender students who were allowed to use restrooms according to their gender identity. Many people were very upset about this reversal in policy and stated that it affected much more than just bathrooms: It was a larger matter of the civil rights of the entire LGBTQ community.

Despite changes in public opinion in the United States and the Supreme Court’s ruling on same-sex marriage, it appears that battles will continue far into the future because of diverse ideological viewpoints and divisive constituencies with different worldviews in this nation. Clearly, the struggle for equal rights for the LGBTQ community is far from over. As one journalist stated, “Half a decade after the Supreme Court’s same-sex marriage decision, the justices and Congress are still trying to figure out what federal law should say about LGBTQ rights” (Green, 2019a). As of December

2019, the U.S. Supreme Court had several cases pertaining to LGBTQ rights in front of them: *Bostock v. Clayton County, Ga.* and *Altitude Express Inc. v. Zarda* involved gay rights. The case on transgender rights is *R.G. & G.R. Harris Funeral Homes Inc. v. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission* (Liptak and Peters, 2019). If you are interested in learning more about legal decisions pertaining to LGBTQ rights, you might wish to read these two cases online. This indecision leaves not only the LGBTQ community but the entire nation in a “legal mess” because, as we have seen, the battle goes on over protection of LGBTQ people in regard to “being fired, denied a rental lease, or refused service because of their sexual orientation or gender identity” (Green, 2019a).

How might we describe the type of prejudice and discrimination experienced by the LGBTQ community? Some social scientists use the term *heterosexism* to describe an ideological system that denies, denigrates, and stigmatizes any nonheterosexual form of behavior, identity, relationship, or community. This term is used as a parallel to other forms of prejudice and discrimination, including racism, sexism, ageism, and anti-Semitism. Clearly, from this perspective, issues pertaining to homosexuality and heterosexism are not just biological issues but also social constructions that involve societal customs and institutions. Let’s look at the cultural dimension of gender to see how socially constructed differences between females and males are crucial in determining how we identify ourselves as girls or boys, women or men.

homophobia

extreme prejudice and sometimes discriminatory actions directed at gays, lesbians, bisexuals, transgender persons, and others who are perceived as not being heterosexual.

Gender: The Cultural Dimension

Gender refers to the culturally and socially constructed differences between females and males found in the meanings, beliefs, and practices associated with “femininity” and “masculinity.” Although biological differences between women and men are very important, in reality most “sex differences” are socially constructed “gender differences.” According to sociologists, social and cultural processes, not biological “givens,” are most important in defining what females and males are, what they should do, and what sorts of relations do or should exist between them. In a now-classic statement, the sociologist Judith Lorber (1994: 6) summarized the importance of gender:

Gender is a human invention, like language, kinship, religion, and technology; like them, gender organizes human social life in culturally patterned ways. Gender organizes social relations in everyday life as well as in the major social structures, such as social class and the hierarchies of bureaucratic organizations.

Virtually everything social in our lives is *gendered*: People continually distinguish between males and females and evaluate them differentially. Gender is an integral part of the daily experiences of both women and men (Kimmell and Messner, 2012).

A *microlevel* analysis of gender focuses on how individuals learn gender roles and acquire a gender identity. **Gender role** refers to the attitudes, behavior, and activities that are socially defined as appropriate for each sex and that are learned through the socialization process. For example, in U.S. society males have traditionally been expected to demonstrate aggressiveness and toughness, whereas females have been expected to be passive and nurturing (■ Figure 10.3). **Gender identity** is a person’s perception of the self as female or male. Typically established between eighteen months and three years of age, gender identity is a powerful aspect of our self-concept. Although this identity is an individual perception, it is developed through interaction with others. As a result, most people form a gender identity that matches their biological sex: Most biological females think of themselves as female, and most biological males think of themselves as male. However, some people think of gender as a *continuum* (a continuous succession or whole) in which biological females perceive of themselves as more female than male, and biological males perceive of themselves as more male than female. Of course, this is a matter for individual consideration, as is the issue of body consciousness, which is also a part of gender identity. **Body consciousness** is how a person perceives and feels about his or her body; it also includes an awareness of social conditions in society that contribute to this self-knowledge. As we grow up, we become aware that the physical shape of our bodies subjects us to the approval or disapproval of others. Being thin and “feminine” may be considered positive attributes for women but negative characteristics for “true men.”



Photographie.eu/Shutterstock.com



Dmitry Kalinovsky/Shutterstock.com

FIGURE 10.3 Which of these pictures contradicts our society’s traditional gender roles for men? Do you see this trend as a positive one? Why or why not?

A macrolevel analysis of gender examines structural features, external to the individual, that perpetuate gender inequality. Gender is embedded in the images, ideas, and language of a society and is used as a means to divide up work, allocate resources, and distribute power. For example, every society uses gender to assign certain tasks—ranging from childrearing to warfare—to females and to males and differentially rewards those who perform these duties. These structures have been referred to as *gendered institutions*, meaning that gender is one of the major ways by which social life is organized in all sectors of society.

These institutions are reinforced by a *gender belief system*, which includes all the ideas regarding masculine and feminine attributes that are held to be valid in a society. This belief system is legitimated by religion, science, law, and other societal values. For example, gender belief systems may change over time as gender roles change. Many fathers take care of young children today while women are the primary income earners in the family, and there is a much greater acceptance of this change in roles by both partners. However, popular stereotypes about men and women, as well as cultural norms about gender-appropriate

appearance and behavior, still linger and sometimes reinforce gendered institutions in society.

The Social Significance of Gender

Gender is a social construction with important consequences in everyday life. Just as stereotypes regarding race/ethnicity have built-in notions of superiority and inferiority, gender stereotypes hold that men and women are inherently different in attributes, behavior, and aspirations. Stereotypes define men as strong, rational, dominant, independent, and less concerned with their appearance. Women are stereotyped as more emotional, nurturing, dependent, and anxious about their weight and physical appearance.

The social significance of gender stereotypes is illustrated by eating disorders. The three most common eating problems are anorexia, bulimia, and obesity. Some studies estimate that at least 30 million people of all ages and genders suffer from an eating disorder in the United States; however, girls and women typically have higher rates of various eating disorders (National Association of Anorexia Nervosa and Associated Disorders, 2019). With *anorexia*, a person has an overriding obsession with food and thinness that constantly controls his or her activities and eating patterns, resulting in a body weight of less than 85 percent of the average weight for a person of that individual's age and height group. With *bulimia*, a person binges by consuming large quantities of food and then purges the food by induced vomiting, excessive exercise, laxatives, or subsequent fasting. In the past, *obesity* was defined as being 20 percent or more above a person's desirable weight, as established by the medical profession. Today, however, medical professionals use the body mass index (BMI) to define obesity. A person's weight in kilograms is divided by his or her height in meters and squared to yield the BMI. Obesity is defined as a BMI of 30 and above (about 30 pounds overweight for the average person). In the past it was assumed that the individuals most likely to have eating disorders were white, middle-class, heterosexual women; however, such problems also exist among women and men of color, working-class individuals, lesbians, gay men, and transgender persons. For example, one study found that 16 percent of transgender college students reported having an eating disorder (National Association of Anorexia Nervosa and Associated Disorders, 2019).

Bodybuilding is another gendered experience. *Bodybuilding* is the process of deliberately cultivating an increase in the mass and strength of the skeletal muscles by means of lifting and pushing weights. In the past, bodybuilding was predominantly a male activity; musculature connoted power, domination, and virility. Today, however, an increasing number of women engage in this activity. As gendered experiences, eating problems and bodybuilding have more in common than we might think. As some women's studies scholars have pointed out, the anorexic body and the muscled body are not opposites: Both are united against the common enemy of soft, flabby flesh (■ Figure 10.4). In other words, the *body* may be objectified both through compulsive dieting and compulsive bodybuilding.



Peter Dazley/Photographer's Choice/Getty Images



Jasminko Ibrakovic/Shutterstock.com

FIGURE 10.4 Not all anorexics are women, and not all bodybuilders are men. However, some analysts suggest that these two issues are manifestations of the same desire: to avoid having soft, flabby flesh.

gender

the culturally and socially constructed differences between females and males found in the meanings, beliefs, and practices associated with “femininity” and “masculinity.”

gender role

the attitudes, behavior, and activities that are socially defined as appropriate for each sex and that are learned through the socialization process.

gender identity

a person's perception of the self as female or male.

body consciousness

how a person perceives and feels about his or her body.

In a now-classic book, *Muscle Boys: Gay Gym Culture*, writer and personal trainer Erick Alvarez (2008) described a globalized subculture of bodybuilding and physical fitness training among gay men that focused on a “built” muscular body. Drawing from his own experience as a personal trainer in a San Francisco gay gym club, he identified categories of gay men—including the Muscle Bear, Muscle Boy, Circuit Boy, and Older Male—that emerged from this subculture, with its distinctive experiences in physical training and bodybuilding. He concluded that many of the men who go to the gym are primarily concerned with body image and the need to look muscular and attractive and to be part of a distinct community. They are extremely vigilant about their workouts, training regimens, and diet schedules because they need to compete with other gay men in the LGBTQ social marketplace as well as in the world at large.

Sexism

Sexism is the subordination of one sex, usually female, based on the assumed superiority of the other sex. Sexism directed at women has three components: (1) negative attitudes toward women; (2) stereotypical beliefs that reinforce, complement, or justify the prejudice; and (3) discrimination—acts that exclude, distance, or keep women separate.

Can men be victims of sexism? Although women are more often the target of sexist remarks and practices, men can be victims of sexist assumptions. Examples of sexism directed against men are the assumption that men should not be employed in certain female-dominated occupations, such as nurse or elementary school teacher, and the belief that it is somehow more harmful for families when female soldiers are killed in battle than male soldiers.

Like racism, sexism is used to justify discriminatory treatment. Obvious manifestations of sexism are found in the undervaluing of women’s work and in hiring and promotion practices that effectively exclude women from an organization or confine them to the bottom of the organizational hierarchy. Even today, some women who enter nontraditional

occupations (such as firefighting and welding) or professions (such as dentistry, architecture, or investment banking) encounter hurdles that men do not face.

Sexism is interwoven with **patriarchy**—a hierarchical system of social organization in which cultural, political, and economic structures are controlled by men. By contrast, **matriarchy** is a hierarchical system of social organization in which cultural, political, and economic structures are controlled by women; however, few (if any) societies have been organized in this manner. Patriarchy is reflected in the way that men may think of their position as men as a given, whereas women may deliberate on what their position in society should be. As sociologist Virginia Cyrus (1993: 6) explains, “Under patriarchy, men are seen as ‘natural’ heads of households, Presidential candidates, corporate executives, college presidents, etc. Women, on the other hand, are men’s subordinates, playing such supportive roles as housewife, mother, nurse, and secretary.” Gender inequality and a division of labor based on male dominance are nearly universal, as we will see in the following discussion on the origins of gender-based stratification.

Gender Stratification in Historical and Contemporary Perspective

How do tasks in a society come to be defined as “men’s work” or “women’s work”? Three factors are important in determining the gendered division of labor in a society: (1) the type of subsistence base, (2) the supply of and demand for labor, and (3) the extent to which women’s childrearing activities are compatible with certain types of work. *Subsistence* refers to the means by which a society gains the basic necessities of life, including food, shelter, and clothing. The three factors vary according to a society’s *technoeconomic base*—the level of technology and the organization of the economy in a given society. Five such bases have been identified: hunting-and-gathering societies, horticultural and pastoral societies, agrarian societies, industrial societies, and postindustrial societies, as shown in ■ Table 10.2.

TABLE 10.2 Technoeconomic Bases of Society

	Hunting and Gathering	Horticultural and Pastoral	Agrarian	Industrial	Postindustrial
Change from Prior Society	—	Use of hand tools, such as digging stick and hoe	Use of animal-drawn plows and equipment	Invention of steam engine	Invention of computer and development of “high-tech” society
Economic Characteristics	Hunting game, gathering roots and berries	Planting crops, domestication of animals for food	Labor-intensive farming	Mechanized production of goods	Information and service economy
Control of Surplus	None	Men begin to control societies	Men who own land or herds	Men who own means of production	Corporate shareholders and high-tech entrepreneurs
Women’s Status	Relative equality	Decreasing in move to pastoralism	Low	Low	Varies by class, race, and age

Source: Adapted from Lorber, 1994: 140.

Hunting-and-Gathering Societies

The earliest known division of labor between women and men is in hunting-and-gathering societies. While the men hunt for wild game, women gather roots and berries. A relatively equitable relationship exists because neither sex has the ability to provide all the food necessary for survival. When wild game is nearby, both men and women may hunt. When it is far away, hunting becomes incompatible with childrearing (which women tend to do because they breast-feed their young), and women are placed at a disadvantage in terms of contributing to the food supply. In most hunting-and-gathering societies, women are full economic partners with men; relations between them tend to be cooperative and relatively egalitarian. Little social stratification of any kind is found because people do not acquire a food surplus.

Horticultural and Pastoral Societies

In horticultural societies, which first developed ten to twelve thousand years ago, a steady source of food becomes available. People are able to grow their own food because of hand tools, such as the hoe. Women make an important contribution to food production because hoe cultivation is compatible with childcare. A fairly high degree of gender equality exists because neither sex controls the food supply.

When inadequate moisture in an area makes planting crops impossible, *pastoralism*—the domestication of large animals to provide food—develops. Herding is primarily done by men, and women contribute relatively little to subsistence production in such societies. In some herding societies, women have relatively low status; their primary value is their ability to produce male offspring so that the family lineage can be preserved and enough males will exist to protect the group against attack.

In contemporary horticultural societies, women do most of the farming while men hunt game, clear land, work with arts and crafts, make tools, participate in religious and ceremonial activities, and engage in war. A combination of horticultural and pastoral activities is found in some contemporary societies in Asia, Africa, the Middle East, and South America. These societies are characterized by more gender inequality than in hunting-and-gathering societies but less gender inequality than in agrarian societies.

Agrarian Societies

In agrarian societies, which first developed about eight to ten thousand years ago, gender inequality and male dominance become institutionalized. The most extreme form of gender inequality developed about five thousand years ago in societies in the Fertile Crescent around the Mediterranean Sea. Agrarian societies rely on agriculture—farming done by animal-drawn or mechanically powered plows and equipment. Because agrarian tasks require more labor and greater physical strength than horticultural ones, men become more involved in food production. It has been suggested that women are excluded from these tasks because

they are viewed as too weak for the work and because child-care responsibilities are considered incompatible with the full-time labor that the tasks require.

Why does gender inequality increase in agrarian societies? Scholars cannot agree on an answer; some suggest that it results from private ownership of property. When people no longer have to move continually in search of food, they can acquire a surplus. Men gain control over the disposition of the surplus and the kinship system, and this control serves men's interests. The importance of producing "legitimate" heirs to inherit the surplus increases significantly, and women's lives become more secluded and restricted as men attempt to ensure the legitimacy of their children. Premarital virginity and marital fidelity are required; indiscretions are punished. However, it has also been argued that male dominance existed before the private ownership of property.

Male dominance is very strong in agrarian societies. Women are secluded, subordinated, and mutilated as a means of regulating their sexuality and protecting paternity. Most of the world's population currently lives in agrarian societies in various stages of industrialization.

Industrial Societies

An *industrial society* is one in which factory or mechanized production has replaced agriculture as the major form of economic activity. As societies industrialize, the status of women tends to decline further. Industrialization in the United States created a gap between the unpaid work performed by middle- and upper-class women at home and the paid work that was increasingly performed by men and unmarried girls. Husbands were responsible for being "breadwinners"; wives were seen as "homemakers."

This gendered division of labor increased the economic and political subordination of women. It also became a source of discrimination against women of color based on both their race and the fact that many of them had to work in order to survive. In the late 1800s and into the 1900s, many African American women were employed as domestic servants in affluent white households.

As people moved from a rural, agricultural lifestyle to an urban existence, body consciousness increased. People who worked in offices often became sedentary and exhibited physical deterioration from their lack of activity. As gymnasiums were built to fight this lack of physical fitness, images of masculinity shifted from the physique of

sexism

the subordination of one sex, usually female, based on the assumed superiority of the other sex.

patriarchy

a hierarchical system of social organization in which cultural, political, and economic structures are controlled by men.

matriarchy

a hierarchical system of social organization in which cultural, political, and economic structures are controlled by women.

the farmer or factory workman to the middle-class office man who exercised and lifted weights. As industrialization progressed and food became more plentiful, the social symbolism of women's body weight and size also changed, and middle-class and upper-class women became more preoccupied with physical appearance and body fitness.

Postindustrial Societies

As previously defined, *postindustrial societies* are ones in which technology supports a service- and information-based economy. In such societies the division of labor in paid employment is increasingly based on whether people provide or apply information or are employed in service jobs such as fast-food counter help or health-care workers. For both women and men in the labor force, formal education is increasingly crucial for economic and social success. However, although some women have moved into entrepreneurial, managerial, and professional occupations, many others have remained in the low-paying service sector, which affords few opportunities for upward advancement (■ Figure 10.5).

How do new technologies influence gender relations in the workplace? Although some analysts presumed that technological developments would reduce the boundaries between women's and men's work, researchers have found that the gender stereotyping associated with specific jobs has remained remarkably stable even when the nature of work and the skills required to perform it have been radically transformed. Today, men and women continue to be segregated into different occupations, and this segregation is particularly visible within individual workplaces (as discussed later in the chapter).

How does the division of labor change in families in postindustrial societies? For a variety of reasons, more households are headed by women with no adult male present. Among white (non-Hispanic) Americans in 2017, 17 percent of all children lived with their mother only, compared to 55 percent of all African American children, 31 percent of all Hispanic (Latinx) children, and 10 percent of Asian American children (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2019a). Regardless of race and Hispanic origin, women in these households truly have a double burden, both from family responsibilities and from the necessity of



FIGURE 10.5 In contemporary societies, women do a wide variety of work and are responsible for many diverse tasks. The women shown here are employed in the industrial, factory sector and the postindustrial, biotechnology sector of the U.S. economy. Do you think issues of gender inequality might be different for these two women? Why or why not?

holding gainful employment in the labor force or finding other means to bring income into the household.

In postindustrial societies such as the United States, between 57 and 60 percent of adult women are in the labor force in any given year. This means that finding time to care for children, help aging parents, and meet the demands of the workplace continue to place a heavy burden on women, despite living in an information- and service-oriented economy.

How people accept new technologies and the effect that these technologies have on gender stratification are related to how people are socialized into gender roles. However, gender-based stratification remains rooted in the larger social structures of society, which individuals have little ability to control.

Gender and Socialization

We learn gender-appropriate behavior through the socialization process. Our parents, teachers, friends, and the media all serve as gendered institutions that communicate to us our earliest, and often most lasting, beliefs about the social meanings of being male or female and thinking and behaving in masculine or feminine ways. Some gender roles have changed dramatically in recent years; others have remained largely unchanged over time.

Some parents prefer boys to girls because of stereotypical ideas about the relative importance of males and females to the future of the family and society. Research suggests that social expectations play a major role in this preference. We are socialized to believe that it is important to have a son, especially for a first or only child. For many years it was assumed that only a male child could support his parents in their later years and carry on the family name.

Across cultures, boys are preferred to girls, especially when the number of children that parents can have is limited by law or economic conditions. In China and India, fewer girls are born each year than boys because a disproportionate number of female fetuses are aborted. Starting in the 1970s, China had a one-child-per-family law that favored males over females. However, in 2013 the policy was revised so that couples would be allowed to have two children if one parent was an only child. What effect this will have on the birth of female children remains to be seen. In India a strong cultural belief exists that a boy is an asset to his family while a girl is a liability. Beliefs such as this contribute to the selective abortion of female fetuses. As a result of these past practices, nations such as China and India are faced with a shortage of marriageable young women and many other problems that result from an imbalance in the sex ratio. Perhaps seeing the consequences of favoring one sex over the other will produce new ideas among parents regarding sex and gender socialization.

Parents and Gender Socialization

From birth, parents act differently toward children on the basis of the child's sex. Baby boys are perceived to be less fragile than girls and tend to be treated more roughly by their parents. Girl babies are thought to be “cute, sweet, and cuddly” and receive more gentle treatment. Parents strongly influence the gender-role development of children by passing on—both overtly and covertly—their own beliefs about gender. Although contemporary parents tend to play more similarly with their male and female children than their own parents or grandparents might have played with them as they were growing up, there remains a difference in how they respond toward their children based on gender even when “roughhousing” with them or engaging in sports events or other activities.

Children's toys reflect their parents' gender expectations (■ Figure 10.6). Gender-appropriate toys for boys include video games, trucks and other vehicles, sports equipment, and war toys such as guns and soldiers. Girls' toys include stuffed animals and dolls, makeup and dress-up clothing, and homemaking items. Ads for children's toys appeal to boys and girls differently. Most girl and boy characters are shown in gender-specific toy commercials that target either females or males. These commercials typically show boys playing outdoors and engaging in competitive activities. Girls are more often engaged in cooperative play in the ads, and this is in keeping with gender expectations about their behavior.

Social media have also added a new dimension to the socialization of children of all ages. Influencers (persons who are able to influence others, particularly buyers of products or services based on their recommendations on social media) have become a new socializing force in the lives of many children who choose to dress, act, and purchase items that young celebrities call to their attention.

At home, when children are old enough to help with household chores, they are often assigned different tasks. Girls often spend more time doing housework than boys. Boys are more likely to be paid for doing chores at home than girls. Parents are more likely to assign maintenance chores (such as mowing the lawn or washing the car) to boys, whereas domestic chores (such as shopping, cooking, clearing the table, and taking care of younger siblings) are assigned to girls.

In the past, most studies of gender socialization focused on white, middle-class families and paid little attention to ethnic differences. According to earlier studies, children from middle- and upper-income families are less likely to be assigned gender-linked chores than children from lower-income backgrounds. In addition, gender-linked chore assignments occur less frequently in African American families, where both sons and daughters tend to be socialized toward independence, employment, and childcare. In contrast, gender socialization in Hispanic (Latinx) families suggests that adolescent females often



Teresa Kasprzycka/Shutterstock.com



Zurijeta/Shutterstock.com

FIGURE 10.6 Are children's toys a reflection of their own preferences and choices? How do toys reflect gender socialization by parents and other adults?

receive different gender socialization by their parents than do their male siblings. Many Latinas are allowed less interaction with members of the opposite sex than are the adolescent males in their families. Rules for dating, school activities, and part-time jobs are more stringent for girls because many parents want to protect their daughters and keep them closer to home. Moreover, studies in the past showed that many Latinas are primarily socialized by their families to become wives and mothers, while less emphasis is placed on educational attainment and careers. More contemporary Latinas are interested in achieving academic and professional goals.

Across classes and racial-ethnic categories, mothers typically play a stronger role in gender socialization of daughters, whereas fathers do more to socialize sons than daughters, particularly when it comes to racial and gender socialization. However, many parents are aware of the effect that gender socialization has on their children and make a conscientious effort to provide gender-neutral experiences for them. Contemporary technology, such as computers, video games, smartphones, and other digital devices, has made gender-neutral experiences more available to both females and males in high-income nations.

Peers and Gender Socialization

Peers help children learn prevailing gender-role stereotypes, as well as gender-appropriate and gender-inappropriate behavior. During the preschool years, same-sex peers have a powerful effect on how children see their gender roles. Children are more socially acceptable to their peers when they conform to implicit societal norms governing the “appropriate” ways that girls and boys should act in social situations and what prohibitions exist in such cases.

Male peer groups place more pressure on boys to do “masculine” things than female peer groups place on girls to do “feminine” things. For example, girls wear jeans and other “boy” clothes, play soccer and softball, and engage in other activities traditionally associated with males. By contrast, if a boy wears a dress, plays hopscotch with girls, and engages in other activities associated with being female, he will be ridiculed by his peers. This distinction between the relative value of boys’ and girls’ behaviors strengthens the cultural message that masculine activities and behavior are more important and more acceptable.

During adolescence, peers are often stronger and more effective agents of gender socialization than adults. Peers

are thought to be especially important in boys' development of gender identity. Male bonding that occurs during adolescence is believed to reinforce masculine identity and to encourage gender-stereotypical attitudes and behavior. For example, male peers have a tendency to ridicule and bully others about their appearance, size, and weight. Because peer acceptance is so important, such actions can have very harmful consequences. Social media provide new ways in which peer acceptance or rejection and bullying can be made known not just to individuals but to large numbers of other young people worldwide.

As young adults, men and women still receive many gender-related messages from peers. Among college students, for example, peer groups are organized largely around gender relations and play an important role in career choices and the establishment of long-term intimate relationships. In an earlier study of female college students at two universities (one primarily white, the other predominantly African American), anthropologists Dorothy C. Holland and Margaret A. Eisenhart (1990) found that the peer system propelled women into a world of romance in which their attractiveness to men counted most. Although peers initially did not influence the women's choices of majors and careers, they did influence whether the women continued to pursue their original goals, changed their course of action, or were "derailed." Subsequent research has also found that some African American women, as well as women from other racial-ethnic categories, may change their occupational aspirations partly based on peer-group influence and their social environment (Frome et al., 2006). Once again, newer options for influencing young people are found through apps and social media sites such as GroupMe, Kik Messenger, Instagram, Tik Tok, Twitter, Tumblr, Houseparty-Group Video Chat, Live.me, Snapchat, and Yubo, among others.

Teachers, Schools, and Gender Socialization

From kindergarten through college, schools operate as a gendered institution. Teachers provide important messages about gender through both the formal content of classroom assignments and informal interactions with students. Sometimes, gender-related messages from teachers and other students reinforce gender roles that have been taught at home; however, teachers may also contradict parental socialization. During the early years of a child's schooling, teachers' influence is very powerful; many children spend more hours per day with their teachers than they do with their own parents.

According to some researchers, the quantity and quality of teacher-student interactions often vary between the education of girls and that of boys (Sadker and Zittleman, 2009). One of the messages that teachers may communicate to students is that boys are more important than girls. Research spanning the past thirty years shows that unintentional gender bias occurs in virtually all educational settings. **Gender bias** consists of showing

favoritism toward one gender over the other. Researchers consistently find that teachers devote more time, effort, and attention to boys than to girls (Sadker and Zittleman, 2009). Males receive more praise for their contributions and are called on more frequently in class, even when they do not volunteer.

Teacher-student interactions influence not only students' learning but also their self-esteem (Sadker and Zittleman, 2009). A comprehensive study of gender bias in schools suggested that girls' self-esteem is undermined in school through such experiences as (1) a relative lack of attention from teachers; (2) sexual harassment by male peers; (3) the stereotyping and invisibility of females in textbooks, especially in science and math texts; and (4) test bias based on assumptions about the relative importance of quantitative and visual-spatial ability, as compared with verbal ability, that restricts some girls' chances of being admitted to the most prestigious colleges and being awarded scholarships.

Teachers also influence how students treat one another during school hours. Many teachers use sex segregation as a way to organize students, resulting in unnecessary competition between females and males (■ Figure 10.7). In addition, teachers may take a "boys will be boys" attitude when girls complain of sexual harassment. Even though sexual harassment is prohibited by law (Title IX) and teachers and administrators are obligated to investigate such incidents, the complaints may be dealt with superficially. If that happens, the school setting can become a hostile environment rather than a site for learning.

Sports and Gender Socialization

Children spend more than half of their nonschool time in play and games, but the type of games played differs with the child's sex. Studies indicate that boys are socialized to participate in highly competitive, rule-oriented games with a larger number of participants than games played by girls. Young girls have been socialized to play exclusively with others of their own age, in groups of two or three, in activities such as hopscotch and jump rope that involve a minimum of competitiveness. Other research shows that boys express much more favorable attitudes toward physical exertion and exercise than girls do. Some analysts believe that this difference in attitude is linked to ideas about what is gender-appropriate behavior for boys and girls. For males, competitive sport becomes a means of constructing a masculine identity, which may provide an outlet for violence and aggression, as well as a means for a few to attain professional sports success and financial upward mobility. Today, more girls play soccer, softball, and volleyball, and some participate in sports formerly

gender bias

behavior that shows favoritism toward one gender over the other.



Mary Kate Denny/PhotoEdit

FIGURE 10.7 Teachers often use competition between boys and girls because they hope to make a learning activity more interesting. Here, a middle school girl leads other girls against boys in a Spanish translation contest. What are the advantages and disadvantages of gender-based competition in classroom settings?

regarded as exclusively “male” activities (■ Figure 10.8). Girls who go against the grain and participate in masculine play as children are more likely to participate in sports as young women and adults. For example, most female professional athletes and participants in Olympic competitions such as gymnastics, figure skating, beach volleyball, and many other winter and summer competitive sporting events are likely to have started these endeavors at a very young age.

Many women athletes believe that they have to manage the contradictory statuses of being both “women” and “athletes.” An earlier study found that women college basketball players dealt with this contradiction by dividing their lives into segments. On the basketball court, the women “did athlete”: They pushed, shoved, fouled, ran hard, sweated, and cursed. Off the court, they “did woman”: After the game, they showered, dressed, applied makeup, and styled their hair, even if they were only getting in a van for a long ride home (Watson, 1987). According to some social analysts, being able to identify the paradox between “female” and “athlete” and the problems that women in sports experience is the beginning of confronting socially constructed gender norms and polarized views of masculinity and femininity in Western culture (Paloian, 2015).

Mass Media and Gender Socialization

The media—including newspapers, magazines, television, movies, and social media—are powerful sources of gender stereotyping. Although some critics argue that the media simply reflect existing gender roles in society, others point out that the media have a unique ability to shape ideas. Think of the impact that television might have on children if they spend one-third of their waking time watching it, as has been estimated. From children’s cartoons to adult shows, television programs are sex typed, and many are male oriented. More male than female roles are portrayed, and male characters are typically more aggressive and direct. By contrast, females are depicted as either acting deferential toward other people and being manipulated by them or as being overly aggressive, overbearing, and even downright “bitchy.”

In prime-time television, a number of significant changes in the past three decades have reduced gender stereotyping; however, men still outnumber women as leading characters, and they are often “in charge” in any setting where both men’s and women’s roles are portrayed. Recently, retro series on network, cable television, and streaming systems—such as Netflix, Hulu, Disney Plus, and numerous



FIGURE 10.8 NCAA women's sports such as basketball are popularizing athletics for young women and making it easier for girls to become actively involved in sports at a young age.

others—have brought back older programs showing an earlier era when men were dominant in public and family life and women played a subordinate role to them. Although many TV series, such as *Modern Family*, have changed traditional norms, offering a wide diversity of families, including gay dads with a child, the shift to retro gender roles in some television programming and films in the twenty-first century has raised questions about the extent to which extensive change actually occurs in the portrayal of women and men in the media.

Advertising—whether on television, computers, social media, billboards, or magazines and newspapers—can be very persuasive. The intended message is clear to many people: If they embrace traditional notions of masculinity and femininity, their personal and social success is assured; if they purchase the right products and services, they can enhance their appearance and gain power over other people. A study by sociologist Anthony J. Cortese (2004) found that women—regardless of what they were doing in a particular ad—were frequently shown in advertising as being young, beautiful, and seductive. Other research shows that TV ads such as the ones shown during the Super Bowl are created to sell products but that they also contribute to

the sexual objectification of women. For example, perfume and chocolate commercials often objectify women, turning them into sexual objects whose seductive behavior is caused by the perfume or chocolate being advertised. Although such depictions may sell products, they may also have the effect of influencing how we perceive ourselves and others with regard to issues of power and subordination.

As we all know, social media can be used in both positive and negative ways. Social networking sites are very effective tools for communicating with others, but they also offer prime venues in which to bully others and spread derogatory comments and photos relating to race, gender, and/or sexual orientation. Today, 95 percent of teens use a mobile device to go online, so they are no longer under the supervision of parents or other adults who might oversee their television-viewing habits or supervise a phone conversation. According to Anderson and Jiang (2018), teenagers say they are online “almost constantly.” Although this research does not include questions about exactly what they are doing online, data from other sources suggest that the activities of girls and young women often relate to the physical appearance of the sender and others, particularly in regard to sexual appeal, appearance, and behavior that identifies individuals

by sexual orientation. Extensive research will be necessary to learn how social networking sites function as agents of socialization in regard to sexuality, weight, and body image, but these sites present a new and relatively unchallenged arena in which one's own beliefs and biases can be not only projected but also amplified to tens of thousands of other people.

Adult Gender Socialization

Gender socialization continues as women and men complete their training or education and join the workforce. Men and women are taught the “appropriate” type of conduct for persons of their sex in a particular job or occupation—both by employers and by coworkers. However, men's socialization usually does not include a measure of whether their work can be successfully combined with having a family; it is often assumed that men can and will do both. Even today, the reason given for women not entering some careers and professions is that this kind of work is not suitable for women because of their physical capabilities, assumed childcare responsibilities, and need to travel in specific kinds of work.

Different gender socialization may occur as people reach their forties and enter “middle age.” A double standard of aging exists that affects women more than men (■ Figure 10.9). Often, men are considered to be at the height of their success as their hair turns gray and their face shows a few wrinkles. By contrast, not only do other people in society make middle-age women feel as if they are “over the hill,” but multimillion-dollar advertising campaigns continually call attention to women's every weakness, every pound gained, and every wrinkle or every gray hair. Increasingly, both women and men have turned to “miracle” products, and sometimes to cosmetic surgery, to reduce the visible signs of aging. However, the vast majority of all cosmetic surgery is performed on female patients. Research has found that female patients who choose cosmetic surgery have lower self-esteem, life satisfaction, and belief in their own attractiveness. Many of them also have few religious beliefs and high levels of media exposure that may influence their desire to change or improve their appearance (*Medical News Today*, 2019).

Knowledge of how we develop a gender-related self-concept and learn to feel, think, and act in feminine or masculine ways is important for an understanding of ourselves. Examining gender socialization makes us aware of the effect of our parents, siblings, teachers, friends, and the media on our perspectives about gender. However, the gender socialization perspective has been criticized on several accounts. Childhood gender-role socialization may not affect people as much as some analysts have suggested. For example, the types of jobs that people take as adults may have less to do with how they were socialized in childhood than with how they are treated in the workplace. From this perspective, women and men will act in ways that bring them the most rewards and produce the fewest punishments. Also, gender socialization theories can be used to blame women for their



Robert Day/Getty Images

FIGURE 10.9 Does the double standard of aging for women and men contribute to some women's desire to have surgical procedures that claim to restore their “youth” as they increase in chronological age?

own subordination by not taking into account structural barriers that perpetuate gender inequality. We now examine a few of those structural forces.

Contemporary Gender Inequality

According to feminist scholars, women experience gender inequality as a result of past and present economic, political, and educational discrimination. Women's position in the U.S. workforce reflects the years of subordination that women have experienced in society.

Gendered Division of Paid Work in the United States

Where people are located in the occupational structure of the labor market has a major impact on their earnings. The workplace may be a gendered institution if jobs are often segregated by gender and by race/ethnicity (■ Figure 10.10). In a comprehensive study, sociologists Kevin Stainback and



redsnapper/Alamy Stock Photo



Kevin Fay/Alamy Stock Photo

FIGURE 10.10 What stereotypes are associated with men in female-oriented positions? With women in male-oriented occupations? Do you think such stereotypes will change in the near future?

Donald Tomaskovic-Devey (2012) described how data from five million private-sector workplaces that they examined confirm that white men still dominate the management ranks and that workplace segregation, based on both gender and race, is increasing in many employment sectors. Nearly a decade later, similar inequalities based on race and gender remain prevalent throughout various employment sectors in the United States.

Gender-segregated work refers to the concentration of women and men in different occupations, jobs, and places of work. Today, 94 percent of all secretaries and administrative assistants in the United States are women while 89 percent of all mechanical engineers are men (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2019b). To eliminate gender-segregated jobs in the United States, more than half of all men or all women workers would have to change occupations. Moreover, women are severely underrepresented at the top of U.S. corporations. Out of the top S&P 500 companies (U.S. stock market index companies), only twenty-seven have female CEOs (Connley, 2019). In *Fortune* 500 companies (the top 500 public corporations ranked by gross revenue), there are thirty-two female CEOs. Board selection committees tend

to rely on the same women to fill board seats across more than one corporation rather than seeking a larger pool of eligible women to appoint to the positions. When there are few women in top leadership roles in corporations, young women lack role models and mentors to encourage them to enter the upper echelons of the business world.

Although the degree of gender segregation in the professional labor market (including physicians, dentists, lawyers, accountants, and managers) has declined since the 1970s, racial-ethnic segregation has remained deeply embedded in the social structure. Although some change has occurred in recent years, women of color are more likely than their white counterparts to be concentrated in public-sector employment (as public schoolteachers, welfare workers, librarians, public defenders, and faculty members at public colleges, for example) rather than in the private sector (in large corporations, major law firms, and private educational institutions, for example). And it appears that resegregation may be occurring in the private sector. Across all categories of occupations, white women and all people of color are not evenly represented, as shown in ■ Table 10.3.

TABLE 10.3 Percentage of the Workforce Represented by Women, African Americans, Hispanics, and Asian Americans in Selected Occupations

The U.S. Census Bureau accumulates data that show what percentage of the total workforce is made up of women, African Americans, Asian Americans, and Hispanics. As used in this table, *women* refers to females in all racial-ethnic categories, whereas *African Americans*, *Hispanics*, and *Asian Americans* refer to both women and men.

	Women	African Americans	Hispanics	Asian Americans
All occupations	46.9	12.3	17.3	6.3
Managerial, professional, and related occupations	51.5	9.6	9.7	8.5
Management occupations	40.0	7.6	10.3	5.9
Professional and related occupations	56.9	10.5	9.6	9.6
Architecture and engineering	15.9	6.5	8.9	11.9
Lawyers	37.4	5.5	6.1	4.9
Physicians and surgeons	40.3	7.6	7.4	19.8
Service occupations (all)	57.5	17.3	24.4	6.1
Food preparation and serving	55.5	14.8	25.9	6.5
Building and grounds cleaning	41.3	14.8	38.8	3.1
Health-care support occupations	87.1	26.2	18.3	5.7
Grounds maintenance workers	6.7	7.5	45.0	1.0

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2019.

Labor market segmentation—the division of jobs into categories with distinct working conditions—results in women having separate and unequal jobs. Why does gender-segregated work matter? Although we look more closely at the issue of the pay gap in the following section, it is important to note here that the pay gap between men and women is the best-documented consequence of gender-segregated work. Many women work in lower-paying, less prestigious jobs, with fewer opportunities for advancement than their male counterparts.

Gender-segregated work affects both men and women. Men are often kept out of certain types of jobs. Those who enter female-dominated occupations often have to justify themselves and prove that they are “real men.” Even if these concerns do not push men out of female-dominated occupations, they affect how the men manage their gender identity at work. For example, men in occupations such as nursing tend to emphasize their masculinity, attempt to distance themselves from female colleagues when dealing with patients and physicians, and try to move quickly into management and supervisory positions.

Occupational gender segregation contributes to stratification in society. Job segregation is structural; it does not occur simply because individual workers have different abilities, motivations, and material needs. As a result of gender and racial segregation, employers are able to pay many men of color and all women less money, promote them less often, and provide fewer benefits.

Pay Equity (Comparable Worth)

Although women make up almost half of the U.S. workforce and are often equal, if not primary, breadwinners in four out of ten families, women continue to earn less than men in comparable jobs. We refer to this as the *pay gap*—the disparity between women’s and men’s earnings. The pay gap is calculated by dividing women’s earnings by men’s earnings to yield a percentage, also known as the earnings ratio. When the 1963 Equal Pay Act was passed, women who were classified as “full-time wage and salary workers” earned about 59 cents for every dollar that their male counterparts earned. In 2019 women earned about 82 percent (or 82 cents for every dollar) of the amount earned by men in the same employment category, constituting a gender wage gap of 18 percent. Although some progress has been made, the gender pay gap has been persistent and has basically stalled over the past decade. As ■ Figure 10.11 shows, women in all age categories also receive less pay than men, with the disparity growing wider in the older age brackets. In sum, the pay gap increases over the course of a woman’s career, and it is typically at the widest point for women in the 55–64 age category. Researchers suggest this disparity reflects long-term effects of both direct and indirect discrimination, which compound over time (American Association of University Women [AAUW], 2019).

Earnings differences between women and men in various racial-ethnic categories are the widest for white Americans and Asian Americans. White (non-Hispanic)

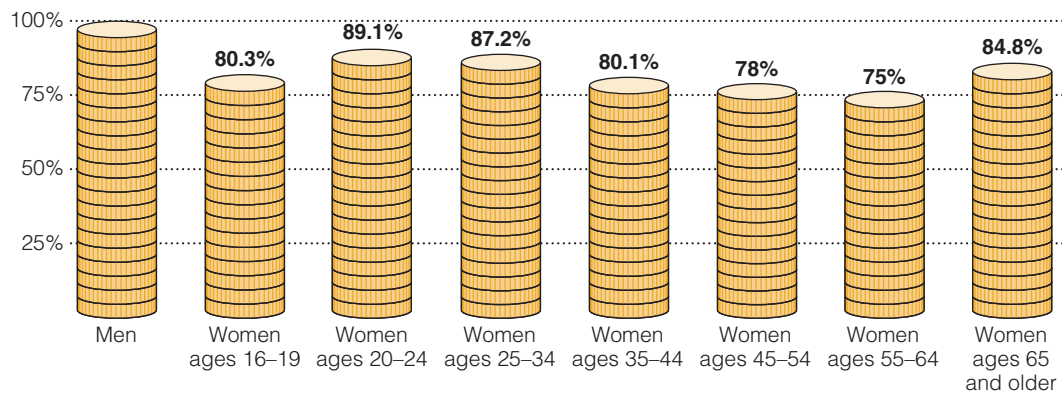


FIGURE 10.11 The Wage Gap, 2019

Source: AAUW, "The Simple Truth About the Gender Pay Gap: Fall 2019 Update", 2019.

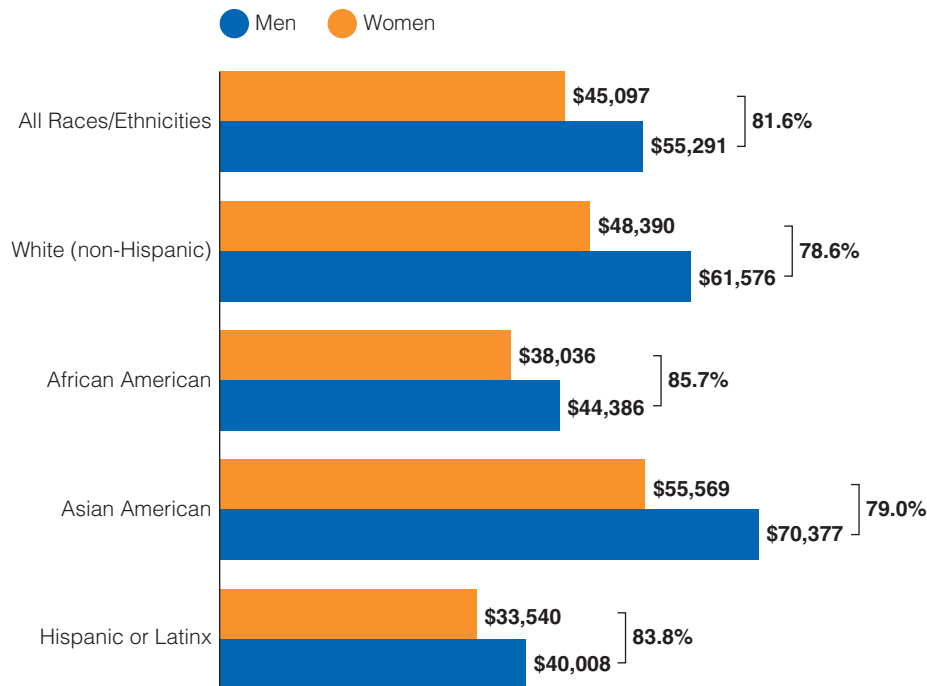


FIGURE 10.12 Women's Median Annual Earnings as a Percentage of Men's Median Annual Earnings (Age 15 Years and Older) in Same Racial/Ethnic Category, 2018

Source: Institute for Women's Policy Research: Fact Sheet, September 2019.

women's earnings were about 78.6 cents for every dollar paid to white (non-Hispanic men) in 2019, while Asian American women earned about 90 cents on the dollar compared to white, non-Hispanic men (see ■ Figure 10.12). By comparison, Hispanic women (Latinx) earned about 54 cents on the dollar, and African American women earned about 62 cents on the dollar compared to white, non-Hispanic men.

The gender gap increases as a person goes higher up the income ladder: Women near the top of the ladder earn less than 80 percent of the wages for men at the same level. Among men and women with advanced degrees beyond a college diploma, women are paid about 75 percent of what men make and are often underutilized and undercompensated for their education. At the bottom of the income ladder, minimum-wage laws (the federal minimum wage was

\$7.25 per hour in 2019) influence what people are paid, so there may be less disparity in income. However, minimum wage varies by state and some cities, meaning that even in low-wage occupations, males often earn more than their female counterparts.

Pay equity or *comparable worth* is the belief that wages ought to reflect the worth of a job, not the gender or race of the worker. How can the comparable worth of different

pay gap

the disparity between women's and men's earnings.

comparable worth

(or *pay equity*): the belief that wages ought to reflect the worth of a job, not the gender or race of the worker.

kinds of jobs be determined? One way is to compare the actual work of women's and men's jobs and see if there is a disparity in the salaries paid for each. To do this, analysts break a job into components—such as the education, training, and skills required; the extent of responsibility for others' work; and the working conditions—and then allocate points for each. For pay equity to exist, men and women in occupations that receive the same number of points should be paid the same. However, pay equity exists in very few jobs. What are the prospects for the future? The Paycheck Fairness Act—originally proposed by the Obama administration and finally passed by the U.S. House of Representatives in March 2019 in the Trump administration—which would have extended pay-equity rules that apply to federal contractors to the entire U.S. workforce and made important updates to the Equal Pay Act, was blocked by Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-KY) from consideration by members of the U.S. Senate. So, for the foreseeable future, women will continue to earn considerably less than men, even in similar occupational categories. When you are reading this, you may wish to use an Internet search to see if anything further has happened on this bill. If things remain as they have been for many years, estimates suggest the gender wage gap in this country will not close until 2019. In the forty years between 2019 and 2059, the average woman worker would lose more than \$406,000 to the gender wage gap (americanprogress.org, 2019).

Paid Work and Family Work

As previously discussed, the first big change in the relationship between family and work occurred with the Industrial Revolution and the rise of capitalism. The cult of domesticity kept many middle- and upper-class women out of the workforce during this period. Primarily, working-class and poor women were the ones who had to deal with the work/family conflict. Today, however, the issue spans the entire economic spectrum. The typical married woman in the United States combines paid work in the labor force and family work as a homemaker. Although this change has occurred at the societal level, individual women bear the brunt of the problem.

Even with dramatic changes in women's workforce participation, the sexual division of labor in the family has remained essentially unchanged for many years. Most married women share responsibility for the breadwinner role, yet some men do not accept their full share of domestic responsibilities. Consequently, women may have a "double day" or "second shift" because of their dual responsibilities for paid and unpaid work (Hochschild, 1989, 2003). Although the original work on the second shift was completed more than thirty years ago, the primary researcher, Arlie Hochschild, has found that time-use research continues to show that women who are employed full time still do more of the housework and childcare than men. According to Hochschild, women have found that the workplace does not provide them with the necessary flex time and parental leave to help them deal

most effectively with both their work and family life. However, according to studies conducted by the Pew Research Center, the time that mothers and fathers spend with their families has changed significantly, with fathers now performing more housework and childcare activities and women more involved in paid employment. Now that both parents work full time in 46 percent of two-parent households, both men and women spend more time juggling work and family life (Patten, 2015). This sometimes constitutes a major concern that may produce stress because even though chores, discipline, and quality time are not shared more equally by both parents, the scheduling of activities and taking care of children when they are sick fall more on the mother (Patten, 2015). Overall, however, most parents agree that there is just not enough time to accomplish all of the things they need to do both at work and at home (Patten, 2015).

Especially in families with young children, domestic responsibilities consume a great deal of time and energy. Although some kinds of housework can be put off, the needs of children often cannot be ignored or delayed. When children are ill or school events cannot be scheduled around work, parents (especially mothers) may experience stressful role conflicts ("Shall I be a good employee or a good mother?"). Many working women care not only for themselves, their husbands, and their children but also for elderly parents or in-laws. Some analysts refer to these women as the "sandwich generation"—caught between the needs of their young children and their elderly relatives. Many women try to solve their time crunch by forgoing leisure time and sleep.

Perspectives on Gender Stratification

Sociological perspectives on gender stratification vary in their approach to examining gender roles and power relationships in society. Some focus on the roles of women and men in the domestic sphere; others note the inequalities arising from a gendered division of labor in the workplace. Still others attempt to integrate both the public and private spheres into their analyses.

Functionalist and Neoclassical Economic Perspectives

As seen earlier, functionalist theory views men and women as having distinct roles that are important for the survival of the family and society. The most basic division of labor is biological: Men are physically stronger, and women are the only ones able to bear and nurse children. Gendered belief systems foster assumptions about appropriate behavior for men and women and may have an impact on the types of work that women and men perform.

The Importance of Traditional Gender Roles According to functional analysts such as Talcott Parsons (1955), women's roles as nurturers and caregivers are even more pronounced in contemporary industrialized societies.

While the husband performs the *instrumental* tasks of providing economic support and making decisions, the wife assumes the *expressive* tasks of providing affection and emotional support for the family. This division of family labor ensures that important societal tasks will be fulfilled; it also provides stability for family members.

This view has been adopted by a number of politically conservative analysts who assert that relationships between men and women are damaged when changes in gender roles occur, and family life suffers as a consequence. From this perspective, the traditional division of labor between men and women is the natural order of the universe.

The Human Capital Model Functionalist explanations of occupational gender segregation are similar to neoclassical economic perspectives, such as the human capital model. According to this model, individuals vary widely in the amount of human capital they bring to the labor market. *Human capital* is acquired by education and job training; it is the source of a person's productivity and can be measured in terms of the return on investment (wages) and the cost (schooling or training).

From this perspective, what individuals earn is the result of their own choices (the kinds of training, education, and experience they accumulate, for example) and of the labor-market need (demand) for and availability (supply) of certain kinds of workers at specific points in time. For example, human capital analysts might argue that women diminish their human capital when they leave the labor force to engage in childbearing and childcare activities (■ Figure 10.13). While women are out of the labor force, their human capital deteriorates from nonuse. When they return to work, women earn lower wages than men because they have fewer years of work experience and have “atrophied human capital” because their

education and training may have become obsolete. Some analysts instead refer to this as the “motherhood penalty” because mothers in the workforce often receive lower salaries than fathers and other women who are not parents. This includes mothers who never left the workforce during pregnancy or to take care of infants and young children. What might cause this penalty to occur? Some researchers suggest that gendered norms and expectations remain about the role of working mothers. The problem is further exacerbated by the fact that many organizations lack adequate paid family, medical, and sick leave, which may differentially affect working mothers (AAUW, 2019).

Evaluation of Functionalist and Neoclassical Economic Perspectives

Although Parsons and other functionalists did not specifically endorse the gendered division of labor, their analysis suggests that it is natural and perhaps inevitable. However, critics argue that problems inherent in traditional gender roles, including the personal role strains of men and women and the social costs to society, are minimized by the functionalist approach. For example, men are assumed to be “money machines” for their families when they might prefer to spend more time in childrearing activities. Also, the woman's place is assumed to be in the home, an assumption that ignores the fact that many women hold jobs because of economic necessity.

In addition, the functionalist approach does not take a critical look at the structure of society (especially the economic inequalities) that makes educational and occupational opportunities more available to some than to others. Furthermore, it fails to examine the underlying power relations between men and women or to consider the fact that the tasks assigned to women and to men are unequally valued by society. Similarly, the human capital model is rooted in the premise that individuals are evaluated based on their human capital in an open, competitive market where education, training, and other job-enhancing characteristics are taken into account. From this perspective, those who make less money (often men of color and all women) have no one to blame but themselves.

Critics note that instead of blaming people for their choices, we must acknowledge other realities. Wage discrimination occurs in two ways: (1) the wages are higher in male-dominated jobs, occupations, and segments of the labor market, regardless of whether women take time for family duties, and (2) in any job, women and people of color will be paid less.

Conflict Perspectives

According to many conflict analysts, the gendered division of labor within families and in the workplace results from male control of and dominance over women and resources. Differentials between men and women may exist in terms of economic, political, physical, and/or interpersonal power (■ Figure 10.14). The importance of a male monopoly in any of these



Peter Dazeley/The Image Bank/Getty Images

FIGURE 10.13 According to the human capital model, women may earn less in the labor market because of their childrearing responsibilities. What other sociological explanations are offered for the lower wages that women receive?



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FIGURE 10.14 Although the gender makeup of the U.S. Congress has gradually changed in recent decades, men still make up about 75 percent of the U.S. Senate and the U.S. House of Representatives. Overall, men still dominate this important legislative body, a fact that the conflict perspective attributes to a very old pattern of gender stratification in human society.

arenas depends on the significance of that type of power in a society. In hunting-and-gathering and horticultural societies, male dominance over women is limited because all members of the society must work in order to survive. In agrarian societies, however, male sexual dominance is at its peak. Male heads of household gain a monopoly not only on physical power but also on economic power, and women become sexual property.

Although men's ability to use physical power to control women diminishes in industrial societies, men still remain the head of household and control the property. In addition, men gain more power through their predominance in the most highly paid and prestigious occupations and the highest elected offices. By contrast, women have the ability in the marriage market to trade their sexual resources, companionship, and emotional support for men's financial support and social status. As a result, women as a group remain subordinate to men.

All men are not equally privileged; some analysts argue that women and men in the upper classes are more privileged, because of their economic power, than men in lower-class positions and all people of color. In industrialized societies, persons who occupy elite positions in

corporations, universities, the mass media, and government or who have great wealth have the most power. Most of these are men, however.

Conflict theorists in the Marxist tradition assert that gender stratification results from private ownership of the means of production; some men not only gain control over property and the distribution of goods but also gain power over women. According to Friedrich Engels and Karl Marx, marriage serves to enforce male dominance. Men of the capitalist class instituted monogamous marriage (a gendered institution) so that they could be certain of the paternity of their offspring, especially sons, whom they wanted to inherit their wealth. Feminist analysts have examined this theory, among others, as they have sought to explain male domination and gender stratification.

Feminist Perspectives

Feminism—the belief that women and men are equal and should be valued equally and have equal rights—is embraced by many men as well as women. It holds in common with men's studies the view that gender is a socially constructed concept that has important consequences for

the lives of all people. According to sociologists, both women and men can be feminists and propose feminist theories because they have much in common as they seek to gain a better understanding of the causes and consequences of gender inequality (see the “You Can Make a Difference” box).

Feminist theory seeks to identify ways in which norms, roles, institutions, and internalized expectations limit women’s behavior. It also seeks to demonstrate how women’s personal control operates even within the constraints of relative lack of power. In the twenty-first century, feminist theory focuses more on global issues such as how “fat stigma” among women has become globalized (see this chapter’s “Sociology in Global Perspective” box).

Liberal Feminism In liberal feminism, gender equality is equated with equality of opportunity. The roots of women’s oppression lie in women’s lack of equal civil rights and educational opportunities. Only when these constraints on women’s participation are removed will women have the same chance for success as men. This approach notes the importance of gender-role socialization and suggests that changes need to be made in what children learn from their families, teachers, and the media about appropriate masculine and feminine attitudes and behavior. Liberal feminists fight for better childcare options, a woman’s right to choose an abortion, and the elimination of sex discrimination in the workplace (■ Figure 10.15).

Radical Feminism According to radical feminists, male domination causes all forms of human oppression, including racism and classism. Radical feminists often trace the roots of patriarchy to women’s childbearing and childrearing responsibilities, which make them dependent on men. In the radical feminist view, men’s oppression of women is deliberate, and ideological justification for this subordination is provided by other institutions such as the media and religion. For women’s condition to improve, radical feminists claim, patriarchy must be abolished. If institutions are currently gendered, alternative institutions—such as women’s organizations seeking better health care, daycare, and shelters for victims of domestic violence and rape—should be developed to meet women’s needs.



Comstock/Stockbyte/Getty Images

FIGURE 10.15 In the past thirty years, more women have graduated from law school and become practicing attorneys. How has this affected the way that people “do gender” in courtrooms and other settings that reflect their profession? Do professional women now look and act more like their male colleagues, or have men changed their appearance and speaking style at work as a result of having more colleagues who are women?

Socialist Feminism Socialist feminists argue that the oppression of women results from their dual roles as paid *and* unpaid workers in a capitalist economy. In the workplace, women are exploited by capitalism; at home, they are exploited by patriarchy. Women are easily exploited in both sectors; they are paid low wages and have few economic resources. According to some feminist scholars, gender-segregated work is a central way in which men remain dominant over women in capitalist economies, primarily because most women have lower wages and fewer opportunities than men. As a result, women must do domestic labor either to gain a better-paid man’s economic support or to stretch their own wages. According to socialist feminists, the only way to achieve gender equality is to eliminate capitalism and develop a socialist economy that would bring equal pay and rights to women.

feminism

the belief that men and women are equal and should be valued equally and have equal rights.

YOU CAN **Make a Difference**

“Love Your Body”: Women’s Activism on Campus and in the Community

Do You Love What You See When You Look in the Mirror?

Every day, in so many ways, the beauty industry (and the media in general) tell women and girls that being admired, envied and desired based on their looks is a primary function of true womanhood. The beauty template women are expected to follow is extremely narrow, unrealistic and frequently hazardous to their health. The Love Your Body campaign challenges the message that a woman’s value is best measured through her willingness and ability to embody current beauty standards.

—Promotion for “Love Your Body Day,” sponsored by the NOW Foundation (2019)

Although this message appears to be for girls and women only, many boys and men are also concerned about their physical appearance, as well as how girls and women are represented in the media. Both men and women can make a difference by becoming involved in a campus or community organization that helps people gain a better understanding of body-image issues:

- Participate in the national Love Your Body Day, which is a day of action to speak out against ads and images of women that are offensive, dangerous, and disrespectful.
- Discourage sexist ads and media reporting about women (for example, a focus on weight or other physical attributes rather than on their accomplishments) by sending letters to the publications or encouraging journalists to rethink how they frame stories about girls and women.
- Think of on-campus traditions or events that promote negative body-image stereotypes, such as parties where students are encouraged to wear scant clothing. Actively encourage the organizers of such events to rethink “theme party” clothing or other kinds of dress that contribute to body-image problems.
- Promote positive body image on campus by encouraging your club or organization to host a “Friends

Don’t Let Friends Fat Talk” day. Have students write down on an index card their negative body-image thoughts such as “I hate my thighs.” Then ask students to wad up the cards and throw those thoughts into trash cans.

Other opportunities for involvement exist through local, state, and national organizations. Here are two places to start:

- The National Organization for Women (NOW). NOW works to end gender bias and seeks greater representation of women in all areas of public life. On the Internet, NOW’s website provides links to other feminist resources.
- The National Organization for Men Against Sexism (NOMAS). NOMAS has a *profeminist stance* that seeks to end sexism and an *affirmative stance* on the rights of gay men and lesbians.



Laura Roberts/Alamy Stock Photo

“Love Your Body Day” and more frequent use of plus-sized models (shown here) in fashion campaigns are two examples of how people send a positive message to girls and women about loving what they see in the mirror rather than feeling judgmental about their appearance. Are you aware of campus or community organizations that help individuals gain a better understanding of body-image issues?

Multicultural Feminism Recently, academics and activists have been rethinking the experiences of women of color from a feminist perspective. The experiences of African American women and Latinas/Chicanas have been of particular interest to some social analysts. Building on the civil rights and feminist movements of the late 1960s and early 1970s, some contemporary black feminists have focused on the cultural experiences of African American women. A central assumption of this

analysis is that race, class, and gender are forces that simultaneously oppress these women. The effects of the three statuses cannot be adequately explained as “double” or “triple” jeopardy (race + class + gender = a poor African American woman) because these ascribed characteristics are not simply added to one another. Instead, they are multiplicative in nature (race × class × gender); different characteristics may be more significant in one situation than another. For example, a well-to-do white woman

SOCIOLOGY in Global Perspective

Women's Body Size and the Globalization of "Fat Stigma"

Of all the things we could be exporting to help people around the world, really negative body image and low self-esteem are not what we hope is going out with public health messaging.

—ALEXANDRA BREWIS, lead researcher for a *Current Anthropology* article on the globalization of fat stigma, describes how perceptions from the United States and the United Kingdom have contributed to negative beliefs about body size in dozens of developing countries (qtd. in Parker-Pope, 2011)

In past sociological and cultural ethnographic studies, people in nations and territories such as Fiji, Puerto Rico, and American Samoa were found to appreciate the "fuller figure" as the norm for women's body size. According to Professor Brewis and colleagues, "Plump bodies represented success, generosity, fertility, wealth, and beauty" (qtd. in Bates, 2011). In some cultures, weight has traditionally been associated with class position in society. For example, being overweight or obese in India can be considered to be a sign that the person is middle class or wealthy. In Tahiti it was

a custom to encourage young women to gain weight and to have rounded faces and bodies that made them more attractive for marriage. However, Professor Brewis's research team was surprised to discover in their eleven-country study that people in Mexico, Paraguay, American Samoa, and some other areas where people typically have been more favorable toward the fuller-figured norm provided high scores for "fat stigma" based on twenty-three survey questions asked during in-person interviews or Internet surveys. Items included in the study represented socially crediting or discrediting attributions related to body fat and obesity such as "People are overweight because they are lazy," "Being fat is prestigious," "People should be proud of their big bodies," and "Obese people should be ashamed of their bodies" (Brewis et al., 2011).

Although it is important for people to learn about the detrimental effects of obesity on an individual's health and for public officials to view wide-scale obesity as a public health concern, fat stigma has become a troubling side effect of extensive global media and public health campaigns to make everyone more aware of the problems associated with being overweight or obese. Stigmatization of obesity generally often becomes a specific stigma against fat individuals (Parker-Pope, 2011). Negative body image and self-deprecation follow when individuals are labeled as "lazy," "unattractive," and "undesirable." It is possible that negative health messages also contain negative moral messages about the worth of people as well. So, the delicate balance in messaging for the future becomes how to have effective public health campaigns that help curb diabetes and high blood pressure worldwide but do not negatively stigmatize those individuals who are overweight or obese.



CHOA/Barcroft USA/Barcroft Media/Getty Images

Many organizations in the United States and other nations use public health campaigns like the one shown here to encourage individuals to be concerned about health problems that are associated with being overweight or obese. However, some social analysts believe that certain health messages may contain negative moral messages about the worth of people as well. Do you think this is a valid concern? Why or why not?

Reflect & Analyze

What signs of fat stigma do you see in the United States or another country with which you are most familiar? How might the media and global health organizations more effectively send the message of the problematic health risks associated with being overweight or obese while, at the same time, encouraging people to be nonjudgmental about the body size of other individuals?

(class) may be in a position of privilege when compared to people of color (race) and men from lower socioeconomic positions (class) yet be in a subordinate position as compared with a white man (gender) from the capitalist class (Andersen and Collins, 2010). In

order to analyze the complex relationship among these characteristics, the lived experiences of African American women and other previously "silenced people" must be heard and examined within the context of particular historical and social conditions.

CONCEPT Quick Review

Sociological Perspectives on Gender Stratification

	Focus	Theory/Hypothesis
Functionalist	Macrolevel analysis of women's and men's roles	Traditional gender roles ensure that expressive and instrumental tasks will be performed; human capital model.
Conflict	Power and economic differentials between men and women	Unequal political and economic power heightens gender-based social inequalities.
Feminist	Feminism should be embraced to reduce sexism and gender inequality.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Liberal feminism 2. Radical feminism 3. Socialist feminism 4. Multicultural feminism

Evaluation of Conflict and Feminist Perspectives

Conflict and feminist perspectives provide insights into the structural aspects of gender inequality in society. These approaches emphasize factors external to individuals that contribute to the oppression of white women and people of color; however, they have been criticized for emphasizing the differences between men and women without taking into account the commonalities that they share. Feminist approaches have also been criticized for their emphasis on male dominance without a corresponding analysis of the ways in which some men may also be oppressed by patriarchy and capitalism. The Concept Quick Review outlines the key aspects of each sociological perspective on gender socialization.

Looking Ahead: Gender Issues in the Future

Over the past century, women made significant progress in the labor force. Laws were passed to prohibit sexual discrimination in the workplace and school. Affirmative action programs helped make women more visible in education, government, and the professional world. More women entered the political arena as candidates and elected officials instead of as volunteers in the campaign offices of male candidates. And a woman ran for president of the United States in the 2016 presidential election. Other women have been candidates in the Democratic primary for the 2020 presidential election.

Many men joined movements to raise their consciousness, realizing that what is harmful to women may also be harmful to men. For example, women's lower wages in the labor force suppress men's wages as well; in a two-paycheck family, women who are paid less contribute less to the family's finances, thus placing a greater burden on men to earn more money. In the midst of these changes, however, many gender issues remain unresolved in the twenty-first century. In the labor force, gender segregation

and the wage gap are still problems. In the United States and other nations of the world, gender equity, political opportunities, education, and health care remain



Jim West/Alamy Stock Photo

FIGURE 10.16 Latinx have become increasingly involved in social activism for causes that they believe are important. Here activists are emphasizing their strongly held belief that we must eliminate racial profiling and harassment of immigrant communities by the U.S. Board Patrol and immigration officers.

pressing problems for women. Gender issues and imbalances can contribute not only to individual problems but also to societal problems, such as the destabilization of nations in the global economy. Gender inequality is also an international problem because it is related to immigration, violence against women, sex trafficking, and other crimes against girls and women (see ■ Figure 10.16). To bring about social change for women, it is important for them to be equal players in the economy and the political process.

Why are gender issues so important for both men and women to consider? When we invest in the future of girls and women, whether in the United States or in other nations of the world, we help strengthen other efforts to deal with social problems such as violence against women, inequality, and poverty. Economic problems around the world affect inequality for everyone in the twenty-first century. What do you think might be done to provide more equal opportunities for girls and women, as well as boys and men, in difficult political, economic, and social times?

Q&A Chapter Review

Use these questions and answers to check how well you've achieved the learning objectives set out at the beginning of this chapter.

LO1 What is sex and why is it not always clear-cut?

Sex refers to the biological categories and manifestations of femaleness and maleness. Sex is what we (generally) are born with; however, this is not always true for intersex and transgender persons and for individuals who are crossdressers. An intersex person is an individual who is born with a reproductive or sexual anatomy that does not correspond to the typical definitions of male or female. The person's sexual differentiation is ambiguous. By contrast, a transgender person is an individual whose gender identity (self-identification as woman, man, neither, or both) does not match the person's assigned sex (identification by others as male, female, or intersex based on physical/genetic sex). An individual who is a crossdresser is a male who dresses as a female or a female who dresses as a male but does not alter his or her genitalia.

LO2 What is sexual orientation? Why is it difficult to estimate the LGBTQ population in the United States?

Sexual orientation refers to an individual's preference for emotional-sexual relationships with members of the different sex (heterosexuality), the same sex (homosexuality), or both (bisexuality). In referring to homosexuality, many people have adopted the acronym LGBTQ to refer to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer persons. It is difficult to determine how many people identify as LGBTQ because of lack of official statistics. Often researchers refer to the problem of measuring sexual orientation and gender as "challenging since these concepts involve complex social and cultural patterns."

LO3 What kinds of prejudice and discrimination occur on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity?

Homophobia refers to extreme prejudice and sometimes discriminatory actions directed at gays, lesbians, bisexuals, and others who are perceived as not being heterosexual.

Discrimination occurs in many forms, including marital and parenting rights, housing, health care, bank lending policies, and other rights and privileges taken for granted by heterosexual persons. Some social scientists use the term *heterosexism* to describe an ideological system that denies, denigrates, and stigmatizes any nonheterosexual form of behavior, identity, relationship, or community.

LO4 Why is gender often described as a social and cultural construction? How is sexism a form of discrimination?

Gender is described as a social and cultural construction because different meanings, beliefs, and practices are associated with "femininity" and "masculinity." These socially constructed "gender differences," based on social and cultural processes, are more significant than biological "givens" in defining what females and males are, what they should do, and what sorts of relations should exist among them. Sexism is the subordination of one sex, usually female, based on the assumed superiority of the other sex. Sexism is a form of discrimination because it is based on negative attitudes toward women and stereotypical beliefs that reinforce, complement, or justify the prejudice. Sexism manifests itself in discrimination, which means acts that exclude, distance, or keep women separate and unequal from men. Sexism is interwoven with patriarchy, a hierarchical system of social organization in which cultural, political, and economic structures are controlled by men. Although men can also be victims of sexism, women are more often the target of sexist practices.

LO5 How does the division of labor between women and men differ in various kinds of societies?

In most hunting-and-gathering societies, fairly equitable relationships exist between women and men because neither sex has the ability to provide all of the food necessary for survival. In horticultural societies, a fair degree of gender equality exists because neither sex controls the food supply.

In agrarian societies, male dominance is overt; agrarian tasks require more labor and physical strength, and females are often excluded from these tasks because they are viewed as too weak or too tied to childrearing activities. In contemporary, industrialized societies, a gap exists between non-paid work performed by women at home and paid work performed by men and women. A wage gap also exists between women and men in the marketplace. In postindustrial societies, more women are in the paid workforce than in earlier societies; however, men and women continue to be segregated into different occupations and have differing family and childcare responsibilities in the home.

LO6 What is gender socialization? Who or what are the primary agents of gender socialization?

Gender socialization refers to the process by which people learn “gender-appropriate behavior.” Parents, peers, teachers and schools, sports, and various forms of media are agents of socialization that tend to reinforce existing stereotypes of appropriate gender behavior. From birth, parents often act differently toward children on the basis of the child’s sex. Peers help children learn gender-role stereotypes, as well as gender-appropriate and gender-inappropriate behavior. Schools operate as gendered institutions, and teachers either intentionally or unintentionally provide messages about gender through the formal content of assignments and informal interactions. In terms of sports, boys are socialized to participate in highly competitive, rule-oriented games, whereas girls have traditionally been socialized to participate in activities that involve less “roughness” and competitiveness. In the twenty-first century, more girls and young women now participate in sports formerly regarded as “male” activities.

LO7 In what ways does contemporary society and the workplace reflect gender inequality?

Gender inequality is reflected in economic, political, and educational spheres of contemporary social life. In the workplace, many women are employed in lower-paying, less stable, and less prestigious jobs than men. This occupational segregation leads to a disparity, or pay gap, between women’s and men’s earnings. Even when women are employed in virtually the same job as men, they often do not receive the same, or comparable, pay. In the home, even though men now spend more time performing housework and childcare, many working women find that they still have many more hours of work to be done each day than their male counterparts.

LO8 How do functionalists and neoclassical economic perspectives differ on gender stratification?

According to functionalist analysts, women’s roles as caregivers in contemporary industrialized societies are crucial in ensuring that key societal tasks are fulfilled. While the

husband performs the instrumental tasks of economic support and decision making, the wife assumes the expressive tasks of providing affection and emotional support for the family. The neoclassical perspective (or human capital model) explains occupational gender segregation as producing stratification because people vary in the amount of human capital they bring to the labor market. Human capital is acquired by education and job training, and it is the source of a person’s productivity and can be measured in terms of the return on investment (wages) and cost (schooling or training). In sum, what employees earn is the result of their own choices, labor-market needs, and availability of certain kinds of workers at specific points in time. When women are out of the job market for a period of time (such as pregnancy and rearing infants or young children), they have less human capital to offer than might be true of some of their male counterparts in the workplace.

LO9 How do conflict and feminist perspectives explain gender stratification?

According to conflict analysts, the gendered division of labor within families and the workplace—particularly in agrarian and industrial societies—results from male control and dominance over women and resources. Some analysts believe that the institution of marriage serves to enforce male domination and gender inequality in societies. Feminist perspectives on gender stratification seek to identify ways in which norms, roles, institutions, and internalized expectations limit women’s behavior and consequently their opportunities in society. These perspectives provide insights into the structural aspects of gender inequality in society. In liberal feminism, gender equality is often thought of as equality of opportunity. Radical feminists often trace the roots of patriarchy to women’s childbearing and childrearing responsibilities, which make them dependent on men. Socialist feminists argue that the oppression of women results from their dual roles as paid and unpaid workers in a capitalist economy. Academics and activists have been rethinking the experiences of women of color from a feminist perspective. The experiences of African American women and Latinas/Chicanas have been of particular interest to some social analysts.

LO10 What gender issues will be important in the United States in the future?

In the United States, and other nations of the world as well, gender equality, political and educational opportunities, and health-care concerns will all remain important in the future. Gender inequality contributes not only to problems for individuals but also to societal problems such as the destabilization of nations in the global economy, further environmental degradation, and massive trafficking and violence perpetrated against girls and women. Men and women should all consider these issues important because these pressing problems affect all of us regardless of our sex or gender identity.

Key Terms

body consciousness 288
comparable worth 301
crossdresser 283
feminism 304
gender 288
gender bias 295
gender identity 288

gender role 288
homophobia 286
intersex person 282
matriarchy 290
patriarchy 290
pay gap 300
primary sex characteristics 282

secondary sex characteristics 282
sex 282
sexism 290
sexual orientation 284
sexualization 282
transgender person 283

Questions for Critical Thinking

- 1 Do the media reflect societal attitudes on gender, or do the media determine and teach gender behavior? (As a related activity, watch television for several hours and list the roles for women and men depicted in programs and those represented in advertising. You might also wish to look at how attitudes pertaining to gender are reflected on social media.)
- 2 Examine the various academic departments at your college. What is the gender breakdown of the faculty in selected departments? What is the gender breakdown of undergraduates and graduate students in those departments? Are there major differences among various academic areas of teaching and study? What hypothesis can you come up with to explain your observations?

Answers to Sociology Quiz

Gender, Sexual Orientation, and Weight Bias

1	False	Although both women and men are vulnerable to weight bias and discrimination, research has found that women typically experience higher levels of weight stigmatization than men, even when they have lower levels of excess weight than men.
2	True	Some studies show that African American women are less likely to be stigmatized by other women of color on the basis of their body size. Other studies show that African American men experience lower levels of stigmatization from both African American men and white (Caucasian) men when compared to the stigmatization experienced by white (Caucasian) men. Additional research is needed before conclusions can be drawn about weight discrimination among people in various racial and ethnic categories.
3	True	More than half of all adult women in the United States are currently dieting, and over three-fourths of normal-weight women think they are "too fat." Very young girls have also developed similar concerns.
4	True	Women have been socialized to believe that being physically attractive is very important. Studies have found that weight and body shape are the central determinants of women's perception of their physical attractiveness.
5	False	Gay and bisexual men have been found to be more concerned about their weight and body image than heterosexual men as a category. Consequently, gay or bisexual men are more likely to develop eating disorders than their heterosexual counterparts.
6	False	The "ideal" body image for women has changed a number of times. A positive view of body fat prevailed for most of human history; however, in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries in the United States, this view has given way to "fat aversion."
7	True	Discussions of eating disorders are more "taboo" among men than women because this illness is perceived as a weakness and a "female problem." However, gay men are more likely than heterosexual men to have an eating disorder, and many struggle with the problem throughout their lives.
8	True	Women in the United States are bombarded by advertising, television programs, films, and social media sites that contain images of women that represent an "ideal" that most real women cannot attain.





Families and Intimate Relationships

11

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- 1 Explain** the characteristics of families and the various types of family structures.
- 2 Describe** the various marriage patterns and the patterns of descent and inheritance.
- 3 Explain** the concepts associated with power and authority in families.
- 4 Describe** the major theoretical perspectives on family.
- 5 Discuss** the key aspects of developing intimate relationships and establishing families.
- 6 Discuss** child-related family issues and parenting.
- 7 Explain** the transitions and problems that occur in families.
- 8 Discuss** divorce and remarriage in the United States.
- 9 Discuss** family issues from contemporary and future perspectives.

SOCIOLOGY & **Everyday Life**

Diverse Family Landscapes in the Twenty-First Century

I've been waking up early, working out and then job-searching. I'm getting into a schedule. I'm spending a good amount of time searching for jobs.

—CHRISTIAN MARQUEZ, a recent college graduate, explains how it feels to live with your parents and know that they want you to find a job and move out very soon (qtd. in Sullivan, 2019)

We're not standing there with your suitcases to say, "Hurry up and go. But you will pay rent."

—MARIA MARQUEZ, Christian's mother, states what she told her son when he moved back home after college (qtd. in Sullivan, 2019)

For close families, like ours is, a multigenerational housing situation can work to benefit all members. My husband has cancer, so combining our incomes and having one mortgage, plus having family members to help, allowed me to work from home and help get him to his cancer treatments. It's a big help for my daughter and son-in-law because I prepare meals and watch the kids after school. My daughter pulls her weight by helping with meals and housework, and so does her husband. It's worked like a Swiss watch for us (qtd. in Almekinder, 2019).

—NANCY PORTER describes how more than three generations of her family live together in the same three-story house and find that multigenerational housing has its benefits



Iakov Filimonov/Shutterstock.com

Contemporary families are more diverse than in the past, including an increasing number of households made up of young people who, at least temporarily, have returned to live in their parents' homes. What larger societal factors contributed to this living arrangement?

Although the personal narratives of Christian and his mother, Nancy and her mother, and Lynda and her large multigenerational family may initially seem unrelated, a common thread weaves through them: Contemporary families are diverse and a record number of them (more than 64 million persons in the United States) now live in multigenerational households (Cohn and Passel, 2018). In fact, about one in five persons live in a multigenerational household, and this number and share continue to rise among nearly all U.S. racial and ethnic groups except white (non-Hispanic) Americans (Cohn and Passel, 2018).

In this chapter we examine the increasing diversity and complexity of family life and living arrangements in the United States and other nations. Family and societal issues such as interpersonal communications, changing economic conditions, divorce and remarriage, and childrearing issues are used as examples of how families and intimate relationships continue to change over time and place. Before reading on, test your knowledge about contemporary trends in U.S. family life by taking the "Sociology and Everyday Life" quiz. ●

Families in Global Perspective

As the nature of family life has changed in high-, middle-, and low-income nations, the issue of what constitutes a "family" continues to be widely debated. In the "Universal

Declaration of Human Rights," Article 16, adopted by the United Nations (2019a/1948), the family is defined as follows:

- Men and women of full age, without any limitation due to race, nationality, or religion, have the right to marry and to found a family. They are entitled to equal rights as to marriage, during marriage and at its dissolution.
- Marriage shall be entered into only with the free and full consent of the intending spouses.
- The family is the natural and fundamental group unit of society and is entitled to protection by society and the States.

According to this declaration, the social institution of family must be protected in all societies because family is the "natural" and "fundamental" group unit of society. Although families differ widely around the world, they also share certain common concerns in their everyday lives. Food, clothing, shelter, and childcare are necessities important to all people.

In the United States the Census Bureau defines a family as a group of two people or more (one of whom is the householder) related by birth, marriage, or adoption, and

Ironically, we did not think she would live this long—she wasn't all that healthy She is doing fantastic (qtd. in Garland, 2019).

—LYNDA FAYE, a 75-year-old woman who lives with her 99-year-old mother, explains how different her living

arrangements and retirement activities are, as her mother's primary caregiver, from what she earlier had envisioned for herself

How Much Do You Know About Contemporary Trends in U.S. Family Life?

TRUE	FALSE		
T	F	1	Most U.S. adults view having a baby outside of marriage as “morally wrong.”
T	F	2	Extramarital sex is still viewed as “morally wrong” by most Americans.
T	F	3	The number of people in the average U.S. household is going up.
T	F	4	A larger percentage of U.S. households are multigenerational than in the past.
T	F	5	Most single mothers who choose to raise their children alone are unemployed and receive government assistance.
T	F	6	Most U.S. children under eighteen years of age live in households with both parents present.
T	F	7	Divorce rates are going up in the United States.
T	F	8	The teen birthrate in the United States is higher than in many other developed nations, including Canada and the United Kingdom.

Answers can be found at the end of the chapter.

residing together. For many years the standard sociological definition of *family* has been a group of people who are related to one another by bonds of blood, marriage, or adoption and who live together, form an economic unit, and bear and raise children. Some people challenge this definition because they believe it simply does not match the reality of family life in contemporary society.

Today's families include many types of living arrangements and relationships, including single-parent households, unmarried couples, LGBTQ couples with or without children, and multigenerational households (such as grandparents, parents, and children) living in the same household (■ Figure 11.1). To accurately reflect these changes in family life, some sociologists believe that we need a more encompassing definition of what constitutes a family. Accordingly, *families* are relationships in which people live together with commitment, form an economic unit and care for any young, and consider their identity to be significantly attached to the group. Sexual expression and parent-child relationships are a part of most, but not all, family relationships.

How do sociologists approach the study of families? In our study of families, we will use our sociological imagination to see how our personal experiences are related

to the larger happenings in society. At the microlevel, each of us has a “biography,” based on our experience within our family; at the macrolevel, our families are embedded in a specific culture and social context that has a major effect on them. We examine the institution of the family at both of these levels, starting with family structure and characteristics.

Family Structure and Characteristics

In preindustrial societies the primary form of social organization is through kinship ties. *Kinship* refers to a social network of people based on common ancestry, marriage, or adoption. Through kinship networks, people cooperate so

families

relationships in which people live together with commitment, form an economic unit and care for any young, and consider their identity to be significantly attached to the group.

kinship

a social network of people based on common ancestry, marriage, or adoption.



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FIGURE 11.1 Contemporary families are more diverse than in the past, including an increasing number of households made up of same-sex partners who are the parents of one or more children. How do you envision families of the future?

that they can acquire the basic necessities of life, including food and shelter. Kinship systems can also serve as a means by which property is transferred, goods are produced and distributed, and power is allocated.

In industrialized societies other social institutions fulfill some of the functions previously taken care of by the kinship network. For example, political systems provide structures of social control and authority, and economic systems are responsible for the production and distribution of goods and services. Consequently, families in industrialized societies serve fewer and more specialized purposes than do families in preindustrial societies. Contemporary families are primarily responsible for regulating sexual activity, socializing children, and providing affection and companionship for family members.

Families of Orientation and Procreation During our lifetime many of us will be members of two different types of families—a family of orientation and a family of procreation. The *family of orientation* is the family into which a person is born and in which early socialization usually takes place. Although most people are related to members of their family of orientation by blood ties, those

who are adopted have a legal tie that is patterned after a blood relationship (■ Figure 11.2). The *family of procreation* is the family that a person forms by having, adopting, or otherwise creating children. Both legal and blood ties are found in most families of procreation. The relationship between a husband and wife is based on legal ties; however, the relationship between a parent and child may be based on either blood ties or legal ties, depending on whether the child has been adopted.

Some sociologists have emphasized that “family of orientation” and “family of procreation” do not encompass all types of contemporary families. Instead, many gay, lesbian, transsexual, bisexual, and transgender persons have *families we choose*—social arrangements that include intimate relationships between couples and close familial relationships among other couples and other adults and children (Aulette, Wittner, and Barber, 2019). According to early research on this topic by sociologist Judy Root Aulette (1994), “families we choose” include blood ties and legal ties, but they also include *fictive kin*—persons who are not actually related by blood but who are accepted as family members.

Extended and Nuclear Families Sociologists distinguish between extended families and nuclear families based on the number of generations that live within a household. An *extended family* is a family unit composed of relatives in addition to parents and children who live in the same household. These families often include grandparents, uncles, aunts, or other relatives who live close to the parents and children, making it possible for family members to share resources. In horticultural and agricultural societies, extended families are extremely important; having a large number of family members participate in food production may be essential for survival. Today, extended-family patterns are found in Latin America, Africa, Asia, parts of eastern and southern Europe, and increasingly in the United States.

With the advent of industrialization and urbanization in various countries over time, maintaining extended-family patterns often becomes more difficult. Today, when young people move from rural to urban areas in search of employment in the industrializing and high-tech sectors of their nation’s economy, extended families are disbanded and nuclear families typically become the predominant family form in that society.

A *nuclear family* is a family composed of one or two parents and their dependent children, all of whom live apart from other relatives. A traditional definition specifies that a nuclear family is made up of a “couple” and their dependent children; however, this definition became outdated when a substantial shift occurred in the family structure. For example, as more U.S. adults have either delayed marriage or decided not to marry at all, a significant decline has occurred in the percentage of U.S. households that are comprised of a married couple with their own children under eighteen years of age, so we look at what some social analysts refer to as the contemporary, diverse family.



Myrleen Pearson/Alamy Stock Photo

FIGURE 11.2 Whereas the relationship between spouses is based on legal ties, relationships between parents and children may be established by either blood or legal ties.

The Contemporary Family—Family Diversity in the Twenty-First Century Moving into the third decade of the twenty-first century, researchers are finding that there is no such thing as a typical family. In the past the typical family was comprised of two married, heterosexual parents in their first marriage and their children under eighteen years of age. This is not the case today. Of course, the question remains: “What is taking the place of the nuclear family?” And more family researchers are finding that the answer is *diversity*—a wider variety of family living arrangements has become the norm. According to sociologists, three major factors have contributed to this dramatic change in family structure in the United States: (1) a decline in marriage rates, (2) a rise in the number of women who are employed in the paid workforce, and (3) a shift from the majority living in a nuclear family to a wider variety of living arrangements, such as multigenerational households, cohabitation, blended families, and more extensive patterns of remarriage. Other factors include the U.S. Supreme Court decision legalizing same-sex marriage.

Marriage Patterns

Across cultures, different forms of marriage characterize families. **Marriage** is a legally recognized and/or socially approved arrangement between two or more individuals that carries certain rights and obligations and usually involves sexual activity. In most societies, marriage involves a mutual commitment by each partner, and linkages between two individuals and families are publicly demonstrated.

In the United States the only legally sanctioned form of marriage is **monogamy**—the practice or state of being married to one person at a time. For some people, marriage is a lifelong commitment that ends only with the death of a partner. For others, marriage is a commitment of indefinite duration. Through a pattern of marriage, divorce, and remarriage, some people practice *serial monogamy*—a succession of marriages in which a person has several spouses over a lifetime but is legally married to only one person at a time.

Polygamy is the concurrent marriage of a person of one sex with two or more members of the opposite sex. The most prevalent form of polygamy is **polygyny**—the concurrent marriage of one man with two or more women. Polygyny has been practiced in a number of societies, including parts of Europe until the Middle Ages. More recently, some marriages in Islamic societies in Africa and Asia have been polygynous; however, the cost of providing for multiple wives and numerous children makes the practice impossible for all but the wealthiest men. In addition, because roughly equal numbers of women and men live in these areas, this nearly balanced sex ratio tends to limit

family of orientation

the family into which a person is born and in which early socialization usually takes place.

family of procreation

the family that a person forms by having, adopting, or otherwise creating children.

extended family

a family unit composed of relatives in addition to parents and children who live in the same household.

nuclear family

a family composed of one or two parents and their dependent children, all of whom live apart from other relatives.

marriage

a legally recognized and/or socially approved arrangement between two or more individuals that carries certain rights and obligations and usually involves sexual activity.

monogamy

the practice or state of being married to one person at a time.

polygamy

the concurrent marriage of a person of one sex with two or more members of the opposite sex.

polygyny

the concurrent marriage of one man with two or more women.

polygyny. Contemporary cable TV shows and streaming services have portrayed some U.S. families whose members live a polygamous lifestyle (► Figure 11.3).

The second type of polygamy is **polyandry**—the concurrent marriage of one woman with two or more men. Polyandry is very rare; when it does occur, it is typically found in societies where men greatly outnumber women because of high rates of female infanticide.

Patterns of Descent and Inheritance

Even though a variety of marital patterns exist across cultures, virtually all forms of marriage establish a system of descent so that kinship can be determined and inheritance rights established. In preindustrial societies, kinship is usually traced through one parent (unilineally). The most common pattern of unilineal descent is **patrilineal descent**—a system of tracing descent through the father's side of the family. Patrilineal systems are set up in such a manner that a legitimate son inherits his father's property and sometimes his position upon the father's death. In nations such as India, where boys are seen as permanent patrilineal family members but girls are seen as only temporary family members, girls tend to be considered more expendable than boys.

Even with the less common pattern of **matrilineal descent**—a system of tracing descent through the mother's side of the family—women may not control property. However, inheritance of property and position is usually traced from the maternal uncle (mother's brother) to his nephew (mother's son). In some cases, mothers may pass on their property to daughters.

By contrast, kinship in industrial societies is usually traced through both parents (bilineally). The most common form is **bilateral descent**—a system of tracing descent through both the mother's and father's sides of the family. This pattern is used in the United States for the purpose of determining kinship and inheritance rights; however, children typically take the father's last name.

Power and Authority in Families

Descent and inheritance rights are intricately linked with patterns of power and authority in families. The most prevalent forms of familial power and authority are patriarchy, matriarchy, and egalitarianism.

A **patriarchal family** is a family structure in which authority is held by the eldest male (usually the father). The male authority figure acts as head of the household and holds power and authority over the women and children, as well as over other males. The most prevalent pattern of power and authority in families is patriarchy. Across cultures, men are the primary (and often sole) decision makers regarding domestic, economic, and social concerns facing the family. The existence of patriarchy may give men a sense of power over their own lives, but it can also create an atmosphere in which some men feel greater freedom to abuse women and children.

A **matriarchal family** is a family structure in which authority is held by the eldest female (usually the mother). In this case the female authority figure acts as head of the household. Contemporary researchers maintain that matriarchal societies still exist around the globe where women control the economy, politics, and the broader social structure. One example is the Mosuo in China, where lineage is traced through the women of the family and property is handed down through the female side of the family. Other examples include the BriBri in Costa Rica; the Umoja in Kenya; the Minangkabau in Indonesia; the Akan in Ghana; and the Khasi in India (Madaus, 2019).

An **egalitarian family** is a family structure in which both partners share power and authority equally. Recently, a trend toward more egalitarian relationships has been evident in a number of countries as women have sought changes in their legal status and also increased educational and employment opportunities. Some degree of economic independence makes it possible for women to delay marriage or to terminate a problematic marriage. Recent cross-national studies have



FIGURE 11.3 Polygamy is the concurrent marriage of a person of one sex with two or more persons of the opposite sex. Although most people do not practice this pattern of marriage, some men are married to more than one wife. Shown here is a polygamist family made up of Kody Brown and his four wives, who have been featured on the TLC reality television series *Sister Wives*.

found that larger increases in the proportion of women who have higher levels of education, who hold jobs with higher wages, who have more commitment to careers outside the family, and who have greater interest in gender equality all contribute to the support of egalitarian gender values in the larger society as these ideas eventually spread to others.

Residential Patterns

Residential patterns are interrelated with the authority structure and the method of tracing descent in families. **Patrilocal residence** refers to the custom of a married couple living in the same household (or community) as the husband's parents. Across cultures, patrilocal residency is the most common pattern. Patrilocal residency can be found in countries where it is to the distinct advantage of young men to remain close to their parents' household.

Few societies have residential patterns known as **matrilocal**—the custom of a married couple living in the same household (or community) as the wife's parents. In industrialized nations such as the United States, most couples hope to live in a **neolocal residence**—the custom of a married couple living in their own residence apart from both the husband's and the wife's parents.

Up to this point, we have examined a variety of marriage and family patterns found around the world. Even with the diversity of these patterns, most people's behavior is shaped by cultural rules pertaining to endogamy and exogamy. **Endogamy** is the practice of marrying within one's own group. In the United States, for example, many people practice endogamy: They marry people who come from the same social class, racial and ethnic groups, religious affiliations, and other categories considered important within their own social group. **Exogamy** is the practice of marrying outside one's own group. Depending on the circumstances, exogamy may not be noticed at all or it may result in a person being ridiculed or ostracized by other members of the "in" group. The three most important sources of positive or negative sanctions for intermarriage are the family, the church, and the state. Participants in these social institutions may look unfavorably on the marriage of an in-group member to an "outsider" because of the belief that it diminishes social cohesion in the group. However, educational attainment is also a strong indicator of marital choice. Higher education emphasizes individual achievement, and college-educated people may be less likely than others to identify themselves with their social or cultural roots and thus more willing to marry outside their own social group or category if their potential partner shares a similar level of educational attainment.

Theoretical Perspectives on Family

The **sociology of family** is the subdiscipline of sociology that attempts to describe and explain patterns of family life and variations in family structure. Functionalist perspectives emphasize the functions that families perform

at the macrolevel of society, whereas conflict and feminist perspectives focus on families as a primary source of social inequality. Symbolic interactionists examine microlevel interactions that are integral to the roles of different family members. Postmodern analysts view families as being permeable, capable of being diffused or invaded so that their original purpose is modified.

Functionalist Perspectives

Functionalists emphasize the importance of family in maintaining the stability of society and the well-being of individuals. According to Emile Durkheim (1933/1893), marriage is a microcosmic replica of the larger society; both marriage and society involve a mental and moral fusion of physically distinct individuals. Durkheim also believed that a division of labor contributes to greater efficiency in all areas of life—including marriages and families—even though he acknowledged that this division imposes significant limitations on some people.

polyandry

the concurrent marriage of one woman with two or more men.

patrilineal descent

a system of tracing descent through the father's side of the family.

matrilineal descent

a system of tracing descent through the mother's side of the family.

bilateral descent

a system of tracing descent through both the mother's and father's sides of the family.

patriarchal family

a family structure in which authority is held by the eldest male (usually the father).

matriarchal family

a family structure in which authority is held by the eldest female (usually the mother).

egalitarian family

a family structure in which both partners share power and authority equally.

patrilocal residence

the custom of a married couple living in the same household (or community) as the husband's parents.

matrilocal

the custom of a married couple living in the same household (or community) as the wife's parents.

neolocal residence

the custom of a married couple living in their own residence apart from both the husband's and the wife's parents.

endogamy

the practice of marrying within one's own group.

exogamy

the practice of marrying outside one's own group.

sociology of family

the subdiscipline of sociology that attempts to describe and explain patterns of family life and variations in family structure.

In the United States, Talcott Parsons was a key figure in developing a functionalist model of the family. According to Parsons (1955), the husband/father fulfills the *instrumental role* (meeting the family's economic needs, making important decisions, and providing leadership), whereas the wife/mother fulfills the *expressive role* (running the household, caring for children, and meeting the emotional needs of family members).

Contemporary functionalist perspectives on families derive their foundation from Durkheim. Division of labor makes it possible for families to fulfill a number of functions that no other institution can perform as effectively (■ Figure 11.4). In advanced industrial societies, families serve four key functions:

1. **Sexual regulation.** Families are expected to regulate the sexual activity of their members and thus control reproduction so that it occurs within specific boundaries. At the macrolevel, incest taboos prohibit sexual contact or marriage between certain relatives. For example, virtually all societies prohibit sexual relations between parents and their children and between brothers and sisters.
2. **Socialization.** Parents and other relatives are responsible for teaching children the necessary knowledge and skills to survive. The smallness and intimacy of families make them best suited for providing children with the initial learning experiences they need.

3. **Economic and psychological support.** Families are responsible for providing economic and psychological support for members. In preindustrial societies, families are economic production units; in industrial societies, the economic security of families is tied to the workplace and to macrolevel economic systems. In recent years, psychological support and emotional security have been increasingly important functions of the family.
4. **Provision of social status.** Families confer social status and reputation on their members. These statuses include the ascribed statuses with which individuals are born, such as race/ethnicity, nationality, social class, and sometimes religious affiliation.

One of the most significant and compelling forms of social placement is the family's class position and the opportunities (or lack thereof) resulting from that position. Examples of class-related opportunities are access to quality health care, higher education, and a safe place to live.

Conflict and Feminist Perspectives

Conflict and feminist analysts view functionalist perspectives on the role of the family in society as idealized and inadequate. Rather than operating harmoniously and for the benefit of all members, families are sources of social inequality and conflict over values, goals, and access to resources and power.

According to some classical conflict theorists, families in capitalist economies are similar to the work environment of a factory: Men in the home dominate women in the same manner that capitalists and managers in factories dominate their workers (Engels, 1970/1884). Although childbearing and care for family members in the home contribute to capitalism, these activities also reinforce the subordination of women through unpaid (and often devalued) labor. Other conflict analysts are concerned with the effect that class conflict has on the family. The exploitation of the lower classes by the upper classes contributes to family problems such as high rates of divorce and overall family instability.

Some feminist perspectives on inequality in families focus on patriarchy rather than class. From this viewpoint, men's domination over women existed long before capitalism and private ownership of property. Women's subordination is rooted in patriarchy and men's control over women's labor power. According to one scholar, "Male power in our society is expressed in economic terms even if it does not originate in property relations; women's activities in the home have been



Monkey Business Images/Shutterstock.com

FIGURE 11.4 Functionalists believe that families serve a variety of functions that no other social institution can adequately fulfill. In contrast, conflict and feminist theorists believe that families may be a source of conflict over values, goals, and access to resources and power. Children in upper-class families have many advantages and opportunities that are not available to other children.

undervalued at the same time as their labor has been controlled by men” (Mann, 1994: 42). In addition, men have benefited from the privileges they derive from their status as family breadwinners.

Symbolic Interactionist Perspectives

Early symbolic interactionists such as Charles Horton Cooley and George Herbert Mead provided key insights on the roles that we play as family members and how we modify or adapt our roles to meet the expectations of others—especially significant others such as parents, grandparents, siblings, and other relatives. How does the family influence the individual’s self-concept and identity? In order to answer questions such as this one, contemporary symbolic interactionists examine the roles of husbands, wives, and children as they act out their own parts and react to the actions of others. From such a perspective, what people think, as well as what they say and do, is very important in understanding family dynamics.

Some symbolic interactionist theorists focus on how interaction between marital partners contributes to a shared reality. Although newlyweds bring separate identities to a marriage, over time they construct a shared reality as a couple. In the process the partners redefine their past identities to be consistent with new realities. Development of a shared reality is a continuous process, taking place not only in the family but also in any group in which the couple participates together. Divorce is the reverse of this process; couples may start with a shared reality and, in the process of uncoupling, gradually develop separate realities (■ Figure 11.5).

Symbolic interactionists explain family relationships in terms of the subjective meanings and everyday interpretations that people give to their lives. As well-known early feminist sociologist Jessie Bernard (1982/1973) pointed out, women and men experience marriage differently. Although the husband may see *his* marriage very positively, the wife may feel less positive about *her* marriage, or vice versa. Researchers have found that husbands and wives may give very different accounts of the same event and that their “two realities” frequently do not coincide.

Postmodernist Perspectives

According to postmodern theories, we have experienced a significant decline in the influence of the family and other social institutions. As people have pursued individual



Philippe Beurgaud/Shutterstock.com



Pattananphong Khuankaew/EyeEm/Getty Images

FIGURE 11.5 Marriage is a complicated process involving rituals and shared moments of happiness. When a marriage ends in divorce, couples must abandon their shared reality and then reestablish individual ones.

freedom, they have been less inclined to accept the structural constraints imposed on them by institutions. Given this assumption, how might a postmodern perspective view contemporary family life? For example, how might this approach answer the question “How is family life different in the digital age, where many of us are surrounded by our technological gadgets?”

The postmodern family has been described as *permeable*—a more fluid and pliable form of the nuclear family that is characterized by larger variations in family structures. These variations are generated by divorce, remarriage, cohabitation, single-parent family structures, and families in which one or more grandchildren live with their grandparents. In the postmodern family, traditional gender roles are much more flexible. Younger people are much less constrained by the hierarchy and

power relations of more traditional families, sometimes to the displeasure of parents and other adult caregivers. In the postmodern era, the nuclear family is now only one of many family forms. Similarly, the idea of romantic love has given way to the idea of consensual love: Some individuals agree to have sexual relations with others whom they have no intention of marrying or, if they marry, do not necessarily see the marriage as having permanence. Maternal love has also been transformed into shared parenting, which includes not only mothers and fathers but also caregivers who may either be relatives or nonrelatives.

Urbanity is another characteristic of the postmodern family. The boundaries between the public sphere (the workplace) and the private sphere (the home) are becoming much more open and flexible. In fact, family life may be negatively affected by the decreasing distinction between what is work time and what is family time. As more people have become connected “24/7” (twenty-four hours per day, seven days per week), the boss or a coworker may send a text or email asking for an immediate response to some question that has arisen while the person is away from the workplace.

The Concept Quick Review summarizes sociological perspectives on the family. Taken together, these perspectives on the social institution of families reflect various ways in which familial relationships may be viewed in contemporary societies. Now we shift our focus to love, marriage, intimate relationships, and family issues in the United States.

Developing Intimate Relationships and Establishing Families

The United States has been described as a “nation of lovers”; it has been said that we are “in love with love.” Why is this so? Perhaps the answer lies in the fact that our ideal culture emphasizes *romantic love*, which refers to a deep emotion, the satisfaction of significant needs, a caring for and acceptance of the person we love, and involvement in an intimate relationship (■ Figure 11.6). In the United States the notion of romantic love is deeply intertwined with our beliefs about how and why people develop intimate relationships and establish families. Not all societies share this concern with romantic love. However, in this country the number of opportunities for romance is sometimes increased by online dating and matching services, such as FarmersOnly.com, which caters to farmers, ranchers, cowboys and cowgirls, animal lovers, and rural residents.

Love and Intimacy

In the late nineteenth century, during the Industrial Revolution, people came to view work and home as separate spheres in which different feelings and emotions were appropriate. The public sphere of work—men’s sphere—emphasized self-reliance and independence. By contrast, the private sphere of the home—women’s sphere—emphasized the giving of services, the exchange of gifts, and love. Accordingly, love and emotions became the domain

CONCEPT Quick Review			
Theoretical Perspectives on Families			
	Focus	Key Points	Perspective on Family Problems
Functionalist	Role of families in maintaining stability of society and individuals’ well-being	In modern societies, families serve the functions of sexual regulation, socialization, economic and psychological support, and provision of social status.	Family problems are related to changes in social institutions such as the economy, religion, education, and law/government.
Conflict/Feminist	Families as sources of conflict and social inequality	Families both mirror and help perpetuate social inequalities based on class and gender.	Family problems reflect social patterns of dominance and subordination.
Symbolic Interactionist	Family dynamics, including communication patterns and the subjective meanings that people assign to events	Interactions within families create a shared reality.	How family problems are perceived and defined depends on patterns of communication, the meanings that people give to roles and events, and individuals’ interpretations of family interactions.
Postmodernist	Permeability of families	In postmodern societies, families are diverse and fragmented. Boundaries between workplace and home are blurred.	Family problems are related to cyberspace, consumerism, and the hyperreal in an age increasingly characterized by high-tech “haves” and “have-nots.”

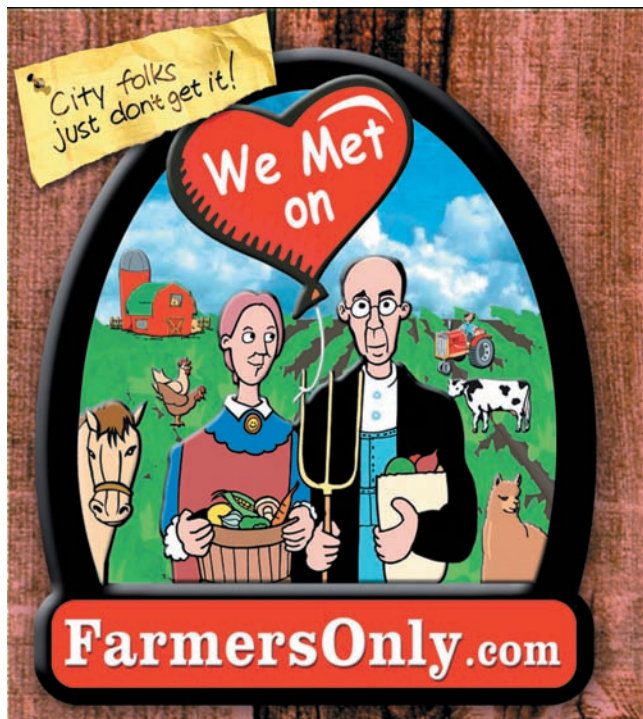


FIGURE 11.6 FarmersOnly.com is one of many online matchmaking services that cater to individuals of various ages, occupations, interests, and geographic locations. What might be gained by using an online dating service? What limitations may be caused by this approach?

of women, and work and rationality became the domain of men. Although the roles of women and men have changed dramatically over the past century, women and men may still not share the same perceptions about romantic love today. Women may express their feelings verbally, whereas men may express their love through nonverbal actions; however, in other cases, the situation may be just the opposite.

Love and intimacy are closely intertwined. Intimacy may be psychic (“the sharing of minds”), sexual, or both. Although sexuality is an integral part of many intimate relationships, perceptions about sexual activities vary from one culture to the next and from one time period to another. For example, kissing has traditionally been found primarily in Western cultures; many African and Asian cultures have viewed kissing negatively, although some change has occurred among younger people in recent years.

For decades, the work of biologist Alfred C. Kinsey was considered to be the definitive research on human sexuality, even though some of his methodology had serious limitations. However, in the 1990s the work of Kinsey and his associates was superseded by the National Health and Social Life Survey conducted by the National Opinion Research Center at the University of Chicago (see Laumann et al., 1994; Michael et al., 1994). Based on interviews with more than 3,400 men and women ages 18–59, this random survey tended to reaffirm the significance of the dominant sexual ideologies.

Today, research on human sexuality continues at numerous universities and other research facilities. Some studies are funded by corporations, such as condom manufacturers or pharmaceutical companies, which might benefit from the research findings. If you wish to look at findings from one such study, the National Survey of Sexual Health and Behavior (NSSHB), conducted by researchers at the Center for Sexual Health Promotion at Indiana University’s School of Health, Physical Education and Recreation, is available online. An area of investigation in this study is the effects of condom use because it is believed that more information will not only be beneficial for individuals but also that it will assist medical and public health professionals who address issues such as HIV, sexually transmitted infections, and unintended pregnancy. A few key findings from this research are as follows (National Survey of Sexual Health and Behavior, 2019):

- Enormous variability exists in the sexual behavior of U.S. adults, with more than forty combinations of sexual activity reported by respondents in the study.
- Many older adults have active, pleasurable sex lives and engage in a range of behaviors and partner types.
- Although 85 percent of men in the study reported that their partner had an orgasm at their most recent sexual event, only 64 percent of women reported having an orgasm at their most recent sexual event.
- About 7 percent of adult women and 8 percent of men identified as gay, lesbian, or bisexual; however, the proportion of individuals in the United States who reported that they had had same-gender sexual interactions at some point in their lives was much higher.
- Despite popular media representations, most adolescents in the study did not report that they were engaged in partnered sexual behavior.
- Thinking of their most recent sexual experience, most people report kissing (87%) and cuddling (70%); fewer (23%) reported massage. Respondents younger than age thirty were significantly more likely to indicate they did not kiss because kissing would have been too intimate with their partner. Only cuddling was significantly associated with event-level emotional intimacy and sexual pleasure.

Cohabitation and Domestic Partnerships

Attitudes about cohabitation have changed dramatically over the past five decades. **Cohabitation** refers to two people who live together and think of themselves as a couple, without being legally married. The U.S. Census Bureau

cohabitation

a situation in which two people live together and think of themselves as a couple, without being legally married.

uses the terms *unmarried partner*, *cohabiting partner*, and *cohabiter* interchangeably when referring to individuals who cohabit. The number of unmarried partners living together has increased from about six million in 1996 to 17 million in 2018.

Young adults have become more accepting of cohabitation, particularly when they want to delay marriage or forego it altogether. According to a Pew Research Center study, 78 percent of persons surveyed in the 18–29 age category believed that it is acceptable for young couples to live together even if they do not plan to marry. However, religious affiliation is a factor in these responses: White evangelicals are most likely (78 percent) to believe that couples should get married rather than cohabitate, while nine in ten persons who are not religiously affiliated indicate that cohabitation is acceptable (Horowitz, Graf, and Livingston, 2019).

Older adults have also become more accepting of cohabitation. Only 2 percent of partners in cohabiting households were ages sixty-five or older in 1996, but by 2017 that percentage had tripled to 6 percent. One explanation for this may be that individuals who are divorced make up a larger proportion of older cohabiters (Gurrentz, 2019).

Race/ethnicity and levels of education and income are interesting variables when studying cohabitation. For example, cohabitation has grown in popularity among some racial and ethnic groups. A higher proportion (16 percent) of unmarried partners identified as Hispanic (Latinx) in 2017, as compared to 11 percent in 1996 (Gurrentz, 2019). A larger proportion of cohabiting partners today also have higher levels of education and income than in the past. Two decades ago, only 16 percent of cohabiters had a bachelor's degree or higher as compared to 28 percent in 2017. In addition, cohabiters have higher earnings than they did in the past when cohabiting was often viewed as an alternative to marriage for lower-income individuals (Gurrentz, 2019).

Looking at the history of cohabitation: Among heterosexual couples, many reasons continue to exist for cohabitation; for LGBTQ couples, however, no alternatives to cohabitation existed for many years prior to the 2015 U.S. Supreme Court ruling in *Obergefell v. Hodges*, which legalized same-sex marriage (see Chapter 10). For that reason, many lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender persons often sought recognition of their civil unions or created *domestic partnerships*—household partnerships in which an unmarried couple lives together in a committed, sexually intimate relationship and is granted some of the same rights and benefits as those accorded to married heterosexual couples. Civil unions—which have been available in some states to both same-sex and opposite-sex couples—provide legal recognition of the couple's relationship and give legal rights to the partners similar to those accorded to spouses in marriage. As of July 2019, five states allow for civil unions: Colorado, Hawaii,

Illinois, Vermont, and New Jersey. Domestic partnerships are allowed in California, District of Columbia, Maine, Nevada, Oregon, Washington, and Wisconsin. Hawaii has a similar relationship known as “reciprocal beneficiaries.” After the same-sex marriage laws were passed, Connecticut, Delaware, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Vermont allow for same-sex marriages and have converted all civil unions into marriages.

Marriage

Why do people get married? Couples get married for a variety of reasons. Some do so because they are “in love,” desire companionship and sex, want to have children, feel social pressure, are attempting to escape from a bad situation in their parents' home, or believe that they will have more money or other resources if they get married. For those choosing to marry, the selection of a marital partner is actually fairly predictable. Most people in the United States tend to choose marriage partners who are similar to themselves. *Homogamy* refers to the pattern of individuals marrying those who have similar characteristics, such as race/ethnicity, religious background, age, education, or social class. However, homogamy provides only the general framework within which people select their partners; people are also influenced by other factors. For example, some researchers claim that people want partners whose personalities match their own in significant ways. Thus, people who are outgoing and friendly may be attracted to other people with those same traits. However, other researchers claim that people look for partners whose personality traits differ from but complement their own.

The number of married households in the United States has been in a downward trend since the 1940s, when married couples made up more than 70 percent of all households, to 2019, when less than half of all U.S.

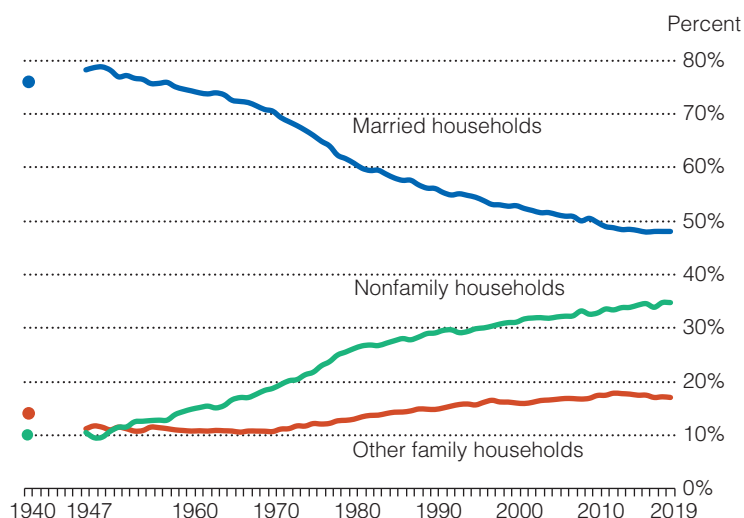


FIGURE 11.7 Percentage of U.S. Households by Type, 1947–2019

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Figure HH-1, “Percent of Households by Type.” Retrieved December 18, 2019.

households were composed of married couples (see ■ Figure 11.7). One reason for this downward trend is the fact that younger adults are now marrying and having children later in life than persons did in previous generations. For example, individuals born between 1981 and 1996 (millennials) have become of marriageable age, but many are not ready to make lifelong commitments at what they consider to be a relatively early age. It is too soon to know what the longitudinal marriage trends will be for post-millennials (those born between 1997 and the present), so we focus primarily on millennial trends.

A study by eHarmony, an online dating site, and Harris Interactive found that today's U.S. couples ages 25–34 know each other for an average of six and a half years before marrying. By contrast, persons in other age categories have an average wait time between meeting and marriage of five years. A typical example of statements by respondents in this study was that of Julianne Simson, who told researchers that she felt “too young to be married. I’m still figuring out so many things. I’ll get married when my life is more in order” (qtd. in Rabin, 2018). Like many other young people, she and her boyfriend are paying down student loans, trying to become more financially secure overall, and still want to travel and see the larger world and to think about their future career options. As more women have entered the workforce in recent decades, there has been a corresponding increase in the median age of marriage in the United States. As we enter the third decade of the twenty-first century, the median age of marriage has risen for men to 29.5 years (up from 23 years in 1970) and for women to 27.4 years (up from 20.8 years in 1970) (Rabin, 2018).

What do experts say about this upward swing in the age of many first marriages? According to sociologist Andrew Cherlin, these later marriages might be referred to as “capstone marriages” because, just as the capstone is the last brick put in place in building an arch, marriage has changed from being the first step into adulthood to the last. As Cherlin stated, “For many couples, marriage is something you do when you have the whole rest of your personal life in order. Then you bring family and friends together to celebrate” (qtd. in Rabin, 2018).

Same-Sex Marriages

Controversy continues over the legal rights of LGBTQ couples even after the legalization of same-sex marriages in the United States (■ Figure 11.8). Let’s take a brief look at the history of how same-sex marriage law evolved in the U.S. Supreme Court prior to the 2015 decision in *Obergefell v. Hodges*. One case regarding same-sex marriage, *United States v. Windsor*, challenged Section 3 of the 1996 Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA), which explicitly defined marriage for all purposes under federal law as the legal union of one man and one woman as husband and wife. The issue before the court was whether DOMA deprives same-sex couples, who are lawfully married in states that permit it, of the equal



Pacific Press/LightRocker/Getty Images



Greta Miller/Shutterstock.com

FIGURE 11.8 The issue of same-sex marriage and LGBTQ workers’ rights have been in the headlines and before the U.S. Supreme Court on numerous occasions because of the importance of various civil rights issues involved.

protection of the laws guaranteed by the Fifth Amendment to the Constitution. In 2011 the Obama administration declared this act to be unconstitutional and ordered the U.S. Justice Department to stop defending the law in court. This highly

domestic partnerships

household partnerships in which an unmarried couple lives together in a committed, sexually intimate relationship and is granted some of the same rights and benefits as those accorded to married heterosexual couples.

homogamy

the pattern of individuals marrying those who have similar characteristics, such as race/ethnicity, religious background, age, education, or social class.

controversial decision was applauded by gay and lesbian rights advocates but was sharply denounced by conservative political leaders. The case moved through various courts until it reached the highest court in the nation.

The U.S. Supreme Court ruled that DOMA is unconstitutional because it amounts to a deprivation of the equal liberty of persons that is protected by the Fifth Amendment. This ruling struck down the central provisions of DOMA that denied federal benefits to same-sex couples who were married in jurisdictions that permit same-sex unions. However, this decision did not address the larger issue of whether there was a nationwide right of all same-sex couples to marry regardless of where they live.

In the second case, *Hollingsworth v. Perry*, the Supreme Court examined the issue of whether the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment prohibited the state of California from enforcing Proposition 8, a voter-approved measure defining marriage as the union of a man and woman and banning same-sex marriage. Prior to passage of this proposition, in a five-month period in 2008 same-sex marriages were legally performed in California. Ultimately, the Supreme Court ruled that the proponents who intervened to defend Proposition 8 did not have legal standing based on the U.S. Constitution and that their appeal should be dismissed. The court's decision cleared the way for same-sex marriages to resume in California. It also meant that same-sex couples married in jurisdictions that permit such unions could not be denied federal benefits.

Although legal, political, and social support for same-sex marriage continued to increase over the past decade, many questions remained unanswered, including how state-by-state laws would be applied in various situations, what would happen when a same-sex couple legally married in one state moved across state lines to another state where same-sex marriage was not recognized, how the patchwork of state laws affected divorce, and many other issues that the Supreme Court did not address when it reached decisions in these two cases. The 2015 Supreme Court decision, issued in a 5–4 ruling, served to settle at least some of the disputes that existed regarding same-sex marriage and to acknowledge that marriage and equal dignity in the eyes of the law are a constitutional right in the United States. Although some of the Supreme Court justices strongly disagreed with the court's decision and wrote scathing dissents, the nation's marriage laws were changed as the United States became the twenty-first country to legalize same-sex marriage nationwide. Married same-sex couples now have the same legal rights and obligations as married heterosexual couples and can be recognized on birth and death certificates. However, controversy remains over whether merchants can deny services for LGBTQ persons, such as the bakery that refused to prepare a wedding cake for a same-sex couple and whether same-sex couples have the same rights as heterosexual couples when it comes to adoption of children, equal housing opportunities, and other rights and privileges that are granted by law to persons not identified with the LGBTQ community.

Where are we today on the issue of same-sex marriage and LGBTQ rights in the United States? Studies by the Pew Research Center have found that, although the public remains generally supportive of same-sex marriage, there are wide demographic and partisan gaps in the level of support, and overall public support may have leveled off some in recent years. As of March 2019, the Pew Research Center found that about six in ten Americans (61 percent) support same-sex marriage. Does this affect the number of same-sex marriages? Probably not. The number of such marriages has continued to rise to the extent that about one in ten LGBTQ persons (10.2 percent) are married to a same-sex partner. Moreover, 61 percent of same-sex cohabiting couples indicated they were married in 2017, and a significant number of these marriages occurred following the U.S. Supreme Court decision discussed previously. Same-sex marriages follow the same trend as other marriages among the general public in that in both categories the key reasons for getting married are similar: love, companionship, and making a lifelong commitment. Although 49 percent of the general public indicated that “having children” was a very important reason for getting married, only 28 percent of LGBTQ respondents indicated that this was a top priority for marriage (Masci, Brown, and Kiley, 2019).

Housework and Childcare Responsibilities

Taking care of housework, childcare responsibilities, and paid employment is a continuing challenge for families (■ Figure 11.9). In 2018, among the 33.6 million families with children under age eighteen in the United States, 90.8 percent of these families had at least one employed parent. In families with children maintained by a woman with no spouse present, the mother was employed in 74.1 percent of the households. But in families with children maintained by a man with no spouse present, 84.2 percent of the fathers were employed. And in married-couple families with children, 97.4 percent of the households had at least one employed parent. Both parents work in 63 percent of all married-couple families where children under age eighteen reside (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2019d). What this means is that many marriages in the United States are *dual-earner marriages*—marriages in which both spouses are in the labor force. Today, even when their children are under the age of six, 61.5 percent of mothers in married-couple families are employed in the labor force. For youths between the ages of six and seventeen, 73 percent of mothers in married-couple families are employed.

So, as we can see, many mothers are working all or part of the day in paid employment and then returning to their household, where additional work awaits them. Sociological research shows that many women, after leaving their paid employment at the end of the day, go home to perform hours of housework and childcare. Sociologist Arlie Hochschild (2012) refers to this as the *second shift*—the domestic work that employed women perform at home after they complete their workday on the job. Thus, many

married women contribute to the economic well-being of their families and also meet many of the domestic needs of family members by cooking, cleaning, shopping, taking care of children, and managing household routines. According to Hochschild, the unpaid housework that women do on the second shift amounts to an extra month of work each year. For fathers with children and no spouse present, a similar second shift may also exist.

But haven't things changed? Aren't men doing much more around the house these days? In recent years, married and cohabiting couples with more egalitarian ideas about women's and men's roles have tended to share more equally in food preparation, housework, and childcare responsibilities (Lachance-Grzela and Bouchard, 2010). Although some studies show that when husbands share household responsibilities, they spend less time in these activities than do their wives, other studies show that the higher a woman's educational resources and earnings potential, the more help from her partner that she actually gets with childcare and housework (Sullivan, 2011). However, certain kinds of activities, such as night duty with young children, appear to be unevenly distributed. More mothers report sustained sleep deprivation: The American Time Use Survey shows that women in dual-earner couples are still three times more likely than men to report interrupted sleep patterns if they are the parent of a child under the age of one. Even more telling, stay-at-home mothers are six times more likely to get night duty where they are up with their children as are stay-at-home fathers (Senior, 2014).

Among mothers who are heads of households and are employed full time, a double burden exists in trying to take care of all of their responsibilities alone or with the occasional help of relatives, friends, or neighbors. For mothers with children under age six, 68.8 percent of women are employed, and for mothers with children between six and seventeen years 77.3 percent are employed (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2019d).



Ariel Skelley/The Image Bank/Getty Images

FIGURE 11.9 Juggling housework, childcare, and a job in the paid workforce is all part of the average day for many women. Why does sociologist Arlie Hochschild believe that many women work a “second shift”?

In marriages with same-sex partners who have children from a previous heterosexual marriage or same-sex union or, in the current marriage, through donor insemination, surrogacy, foster care, or adoption, negotiations about childrearing tasks are also prevalent. If one partner is employed full time outside the household while the other is a stay-at-home parent or is employed part time, childrearing duties and school-related meetings and tasks are often the responsibility of the one who fulfills the “daytime” parenting duties. However, when both partners are employed full time, particularly in professional occupations, each parent may have variable family duties depending on external scheduling demands and priorities.

In the United States, millions of parents rely on outside childcare so that they can work. Among children three to five years old who have employed mothers, about 54 percent receive center-based care

such as daycare, nursery school, preschool, or Head Start. Home-based relative care (father, grandparent, sibling, or other relative) accounts for about 18 percent of childcare, while home-based nonrelative care (such as a nanny, au pair, or other daycare provider) accounts for 11 percent of care (Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics, 2019). The cost of childcare programs often makes it difficult for families to find a high-quality environment for their children. Church-sponsored programs, such as “Mothers’ Day Out” or “Parents’ Day Out,” have become increasingly popular with young working mothers who use these facilities for one or more days per week as a form of relatively inexpensive daycare for their children while they are at work.

dual-earner marriages

marriages in which both spouses are in the labor force.

second shift

Hochschild’s term for the domestic work that employed women perform at home after they complete their workday on the job.

Although organized after-school programs have become more numerous, the percentage of children staying home alone has remained steady in recent years. About 11.3 million school-age children stay alone after the school day ends until a parent returns home from work. Childcare specialists are concerned about this because children need productive and safe activities to engage in while their parents are working, but many home-alone children spend time eating junk food, watching television, texting, viewing social media, or playing computer and video games. Many of these children are under the supervision of an older brother or sister who may not be particularly interested in taking care of them. Older children are more likely than younger ones to care for themselves (Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics, 2019).

Child-Related Family Issues and Parenting

Not all couples become parents. Those who decide not to have children often consider themselves to be “child-free,” whereas those who do not produce children through no choice of their own may consider themselves “childless.”

Deciding to Have Children

Cultural attitudes about whether to have children and about how many children to have began to change in the United States in the late 1950s. In 2018, the U.S. birth rate continued to decline to its lowest level in thirty-two years. The total fertility rate, an estimate of the number of children born over a woman's lifetime, fell to a record low of 1,728 births per 1,000 women (Stack, 2019). This is below replacement level for a generation. A 7 percent decline was reported in the birthrate among teenagers, producing a record low of 179,607 children who were born to mothers between the ages of fifteen and nineteen. The birthrate also declined among other segments of the population, including Asian Americans, American Indians and Alaska Natives, non-Hispanic white and African American (black) women, and Hispanics. The exceptions in declining birthrate were Native Hawaiians and other Pacific Islanders and women between the ages of thirty-five and forty-four, who had slightly increased birth rates due to later birth of first or subsequent children.

In 2018, the percentage of births to unmarried women was 40.1 percent per 1,000 unmarried women ages 15–44, down 2 percent from 2017. The 2018 nonmarital birthrate was 23 percent lower than the peak of 51.8 in 2007 and 2008. In 2018, the percentage of nonmarital births decreased from 2017 for three groups: non-Hispanic white (28.2% in 2018), Hispanic (51.8%), and American Indian and Alaska Native women (68.2%). The percentage of nonmarital births increased for Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islander women (50.4%) and was unchanged for two groups: African

American (69.4%) and Asian American women (11.7%). Differences in births to unmarried women vary by state: The percentages of unmarried births ranged from about one in five births in Utah (19.2%) to more than one-half of births in Louisiana (53.3%), Mississippi (54.1%), and New Mexico (51.2%) (Hamilton et al., 2019).

Advances in birth-control techniques—including more advanced birth control pills, IUDs, contraceptive patches, and birth control shots or implants—now make it possible for people to decide whether they want to have children, how many they wish to have, and to determine (at least somewhat) the spacing of the children's births. However, sociologists suggest that fertility is linked not only to reproductive technologies but also to women's beliefs that they do or do not have other opportunities in society that are viable alternatives to childbearing.

Today, the concept of reproductive freedom includes both the desire *to have* or *not to have* one or more children. According to some sociologists, many U.S. women spend up to one-half of their life attempting to control reproduction while other women and men choose to be child-free. Some women are voluntarily childless (also known as child-free) because they choose to not have children for a variety of reasons ranging from personal health and appearance to family and societal economic conditions or educational and career opportunities. Among U.S. women ages 15–44, sometimes referred to as the “childbearing years,” it is estimated that between 6 and 10 percent of women are voluntarily childless. The percentage of women who are voluntarily childless is higher among women who hold advanced, professional degrees, although in recent years, more women in this category have chosen to have one or two children. When some people decide not to have children, their wishes come into conflict with our society's *pronatalist bias*, which assumes that having children is the norm and can be taken for granted, whereas those who choose not to have children believe that they must justify their decision to others. Studies in Australia have found that, like many women without children in the United States, childless women in Australia not only face scrutiny from other people for their decision not to have children, but they are also socially excluded because they do not have children that other parents can invite to kiddie birthday parties where parents are included. Later in life childless women often do not have grandchildren to help them become members of groups where other grandmothers love to share stories and pictures of their grandchildren (Scott, 2020).

By contrast with women (and some men as well) who choose not to become parents, some couples experience the condition of *involuntary infertility*, whereby they want to have a child but find that they are physically unable to do so. *Infertility* is defined as an inability to conceive after a year of unprotected sexual relations. Women who are able to get pregnant but who are not able to stay pregnant may also be defined as infertile. Research suggests that fertility problems originate in females in approximately one-third of the cases, with males in about one-third of the cases, and with

both the male and female in about one-third of the cases (Mayo Clinic, 2011). Leading causes of male infertility are abnormal sperm production or function, sexual problems, general health and lifestyle issues, overexposure to certain environmental factors (such as pesticides and other chemicals or heat), and age. The most common causes of female infertility include fallopian tube damage or blockage, endometriosis, ovulation disorders, early menopause, and other health-related disorders (Mayo Clinic, 2011). It is estimated that about half of infertile couples who seek treatments such as medication, behavioral approaches, fertility drugs, artificial insemination, and surgery can be helped; however, some are unable to overcome infertility despite expensive treatments such as *assisted reproductive technology (ART)*, which includes medical procedures such as *in vitro fertilization*, whereby medical professionals help infertile couples achieve pregnancy (Mayo Clinic, 2011). Some people who are involuntarily childless may choose surrogacy or adoption as an alternate way to become a parent (see this chapter's "Sociology in Global Perspective" box).

Adoption

Adoption is a legal process through which the rights and duties of parenting are transferred from a child's biological and/or legal parents to a new legal parent or parents. This procedure gives the adopted child all the rights of a biological child. In most adoptions a new birth certificate is issued, and the child has no future contact with the biological parents; however, some states have "right-to-know" laws under which adoptive parents must grant the biological parents visitation rights.

Estimates suggest that between 135,000 and 140,000 children are adopted each year in the United States. Some of these children were previously in the foster care system and later were adopted by individuals or families. Other infants and children were given up by parents at birth for adoption. Still others had been living with relatives other than their parents before adoption or were placed in U.S. homes through the process of international adoption.

Matching children who are available for adoption with prospective adoptive parents can be difficult. The available children have specific needs, and the prospective parents often set specifications on the type of child they want to adopt. Many white (non-Hispanic) persons indicate a preference for adopting white children; however, the system does not always have such availability. For example, about 37 percent of adopted children are white (non-Hispanic) as compared with 73 percent of adoptive parents who are white (non-Hispanic). Some adoptions are by relatives of the child; others are by infertile couples (although many fertile couples also adopt). Increasing numbers of LGBTQ persons and individuals who are single are adopting children. Some prospective parents seek out children from other nations such as China. Although international adoptions have been a popular source of children for adoption in this country, the Trump administration imposed new, more

restrictive regulations on such adoptions, leading to a significant decline in the number of intercountry adoptions by Americans. Estimates suggest that over 400,000 children are in foster care throughout the United States and more than 100,000 of those cannot be returned to their families and are waiting for adoption (Adoption Network, 2019; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services [DHHS], 2019a).

Teenage Childbearing

Teenage childbearing is a popular topic in the media and political discourse, and U.S. teen pregnancy rates are among the highest of all Western industrialized nations. However, as shown in ■ Figure 11.10, the U.S. teen birthrate (between the ages of fifteen and nineteen) has generally been in a decline across all racial and ethnic categories from 1990 until 2017 (the latest year available at the time of this writing). Teen birthrates vary widely by age, racial and ethnic group, and region of the country. Most adolescents who give birth are eighteen or older. For example, in 2017, 75 percent of all teen births were to young women eighteen or nineteen years of age. Teen birthrates are also higher among Hispanic (Latinx) and African American (black) young women than among their white (non-Hispanic) counterparts. The birthrate for Hispanic teenagers between the ages of fifteen and nineteen was 28.9 births per 1,000 adolescent females. The birthrate for African American (black) adolescent females in the same age category was 27.6 and for white (non-Hispanic) adolescent females the rate was 13.4 births per 1,000 adolescent females (DHHS, 2019c). Across all categories, the 2017 teen birthrate was 18.8 births for every 1,000 adolescent females ages 15–19 (accounting for more than 194,000 babies) as compared to 24.2 births per 1,000 in 2014 (DHHS, 2019c). This was the lowest rate ever reported in the United States. Although teen pregnancy rates have continued to decline, concern remains about the number of younger teenagers (ages 15–17) who are having children.

What are the primary reasons for teenage pregnancy? At the microlevel, several issues are most important: (1) many sexually active teenagers do not use contraceptives and have been taught abstinence rather than protection in health education courses; (2) teenagers—especially those from low-income families and/or subordinate racial and ethnic groups—may receive little accurate information about the use of, and problems associated with, contraception; (3) some teenage males (based on the myth that sexual promiscuity is acceptable among males but not females) believe that females should be responsible for contraception; and (4) some teenagers view pregnancy as a sign of male prowess or as a way to gain adult status (■ Figure 11.11).

At the macrolevel, structural factors also contribute to teenage pregnancy rates. Lack of education and employment opportunities may discourage young people's thoughts of upward mobility. Likewise, religious and political opposition has resulted in issues relating to reproductive responsibility not being dealt with as openly in the United States as in some other nations. Finally, advertising, film, television

SOCIOLOGY IN **Global Perspective**

Wombs-for-Rent: Commercial Surrogacy in India and the United States

Why do some individuals and couples in the United States, the United Kingdom, and elsewhere want to “hire” a woman to have their child? Most couples who engage in this practice have made numerous attempts to have a child through in vitro fertilization and other assisted reproductive technologies. If they have been unsuccessful in their efforts, the couple may first attempt to find a surrogate in the United States, but they quickly learn that a U.S. gestational surrogate costs more than \$50,000—far more than they would pay for a surrogate in countries such as India, at least until recently. Earning money through surrogacy helps lower-income women find a way to make money for their household and makes them more independent. Until it became illegal to get paid as a surrogate mother in India, the typical woman might earn more for one surrogate pregnancy than she would earn in 15 years from other kinds of employment. It was estimated that the commercial surrogacy industry was once a \$400 million-a-year enterprise in India until legislation, known as the Surrogacy (Regulation) Bill, passed in the Lower House of the Parliament and was moving forward through the Parliament to completely ban commercial surrogacy and sharply limit altruistic surrogacy (Kumar, 2019). Altruistic surrogacy refers to a situation in which a woman serves as a surrogate for a close relative with no money involved. The proposed bill allows only heterosexual Indian couples who have been legally married for at least five years to opt for surrogacy. Even more limiting is the restriction that the surrogate mother herself must be a relative to the couple, be married, have children of her own, and be between the ages of twenty-five and thirty-five (Pundir, 2019). Through this action,

the Parliament hopes to put an end to India being known as the “rent-a-womb” capital of the world. It will be interesting to see what happens to the practice of surrogacy in India because many women oppose this possible law and believe they have a right to make decisions for their own bodies. They also see surrogacy as an important source of income, particularly among persons from lower-income families.



Gotham/GC Images/Getty Images

Two of the four children of celebrity Kim Kardashian and her rapper, singer, and entrepreneur husband, Kanye West, were born with the help of a surrogate mother. In some countries, this practice is referred to as “rent-a-womb.” However, Kardashian informed the media that she used a surrogate mother strictly for personal health reasons.

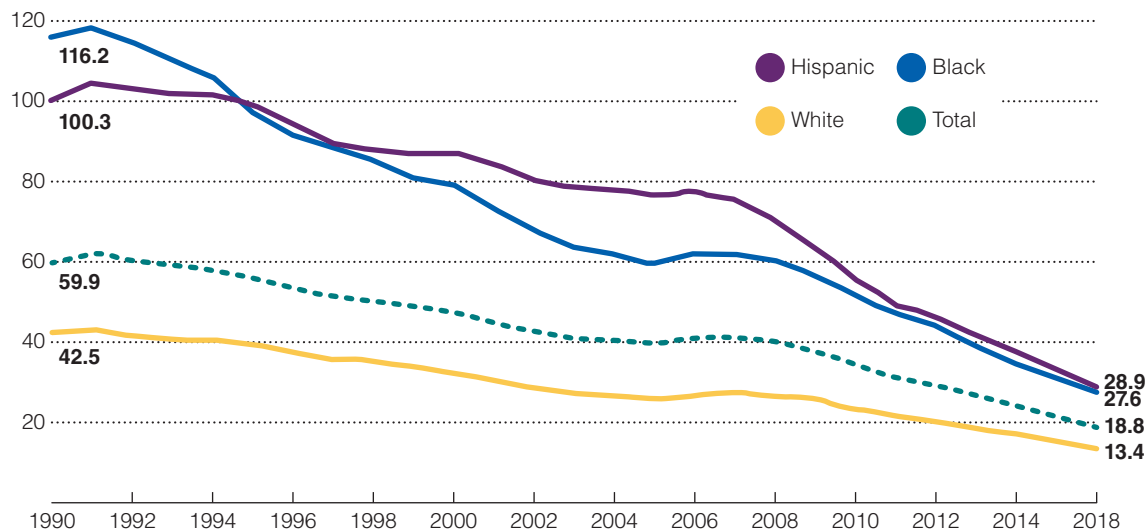


FIGURE 11.10 U.S. Birthrates per 1,000 Females Ages 15–19, by Race/Ethnicity, 1990–2018

Source: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, “Trends in Teen Pregnancy and Childbearing,” 2019.

But another interesting question remains: Where do people in the United States, particularly wealthy celebrities, find surrogates to carry their children? All forms of media constantly carry stories about celebrities such as Kim Kardashian West and Kanye West, who hire women to carry their children, as they did with their third and fourth children. (Kardashian West has stated that she is no longer able to carry her own children because she suffers from placenta accrete, a condition that occurs when the placenta grows too deeply into the uterine wall and can cause severe blood loss after delivery.) Other U.S. celebrities who have had children via surrogate include Andy Cohen, a Bravo TV producer and host; Gabrielle Union and Dwyane Wade, an actress and her NBA star husband; Fredrik Eklund, star of *Million Dollar Listing New York* on Bravo TV; Sarah Jessica Parker and Matthew Broderick, stage and screen actors; Neil Patrick Harris and David Burtka, actors; Jimmy Fallon, host of NBC TV's *Tonight Show*; and many others (Juneau, 2019). In 2019, *People* magazine printed the article "34 Famous Families Who've Welcomed Children Through Surrogacy," but no indication is given of the women who served as surrogates or whether they lived in the United States or another country.

Are there problems with national and global "rent-a-womb" relationships? If there is an agreement between a surrogate mother and an individual or couple who wants a child badly, some analysts believe that "offer and acceptance" is nothing more than capitalism at work—where there is a demand for such services, there will be a supply (particularly from lower-income surrogate mothers or women who state

that they "like" being pregnant and desire to do something to help someone else have a much-wanted child). However, some ethicists raise questions about the practice of commercial surrogacy: A mother should give birth to a child because it is hers and she loves it, not because she is being paid to give birth to someone else's baby. For the time being, many surrogacy agencies exist in the United States and other nations of the world. Some of these agencies primarily serve high-income individuals and wealthy celebrities; however, other underground surrogacy agencies run operations where the needs of potential parents and surrogate mothers may take a back seat to the lucrative practice of "renting wombs" because it has such a high profit margin. And the process must be very expensive for potential customers, because Google searches routinely produce ads from surrogacy agencies offering up to \$80,000 to women who are willing to become surrogates.

Reflect & Analyze

What are your thoughts on surrogacy? Is there any difference between celebrity surrogacy when it occurs in high-income nations such as the United States as compared to situations where surrogate mothers in lower-income nations are seeking money to survive?



Creative Images/Shutterstock.com

FIGURE 11.11 Although the rates of teen pregnancy have been declining in the United States, the number of pregnant teens in this country remains high. Among high-income nations of the world, the United States has one of the highest rates of teen pregnancy and teen parenthood. What are the effects of teen pregnancy and parenthood on the lives of young mothers and fathers?

programming, magazines, music, and social media often flaunt the idea of being sexually active without showing the possible consequences of such behavior.

Teen pregnancies are of concern to analysts who argue that teenage mothers and their children experience strong socioeconomic disadvantages. Studies show that younger teen mothers may be less skilled at parenting, are less likely to complete high school than their counterparts without children, and possess few economic and social supports other than their relatives. In addition, these births may have negative long-term consequences for these mothers and their children, who may also have limited educational and employment opportunities and a high likelihood of living in poverty.

Teenage fathers have largely been left out of the picture in most studies of teen pregnancy and parenting. How does having a teen father affect a child's health and development? One study found that the father-child relationship does not differ significantly between having a teen or adult father when factors such as marital status and economic

disadvantage are held constant. For example, in families where the father, regardless of his age, is nonresidential (lives elsewhere) or cohabits occasionally, children are placed at a social disadvantage when compared to children whose father is married to the teen mother and resides in a more permanent family arrangement. What about the effects of teen parenting on the father? According to a study on the effects of teenage fatherhood, teen pregnancy led to a decrease in the number of years of schooling among teen fathers, many of whom sought early full-time employment, enrolled in the military, or acquired high school equivalency diplomas once they became fathers.

Single-Parent Households

Since 1970, there has been a significant increase in single-parent or one-parent households with children under age eighteen because of divorce and births outside of marriage. In 2019, 21.4 percent of children lived in mother-only families and 4.4 percent lived in father-only families, for a total of 25.8 percent of children in single-parent households. Four percent of all children in this category lived with neither parent (U.S. Census Bureau, 2019a). As shown in ■ Figure 11.12, the percentage of mother-only family groups has decreased slightly in the 2010s while the percentage of father-only family groups with children under age eighteen has grown slightly.

Does living in a single-parent family put children at risk? Single-parent households, particularly some of those headed by women, tend to have lower incomes than two-parent families. Cohabiting families fall in between

those two. Income is only one factor, however. Health, educational attainment, behavior problems, and psychological well-being are also factors that some researchers associate with living outside of a married, two-parent family.

According to some researchers, the increase in the proportion of single-parent households tends to place children in situations where they experience a lower standard of living, receive less effective parenting, experience less cooperative co-parenting, are less emotionally close to both parents, and are subjected to more stressful events and circumstances than children who grow up in stable, two-parent families. Why does this occur? Because of factors such as economic hardships that force single-parent families to do without books, without computers, and without homes in better neighborhoods and school districts. When this problem is coupled with the lack of time for parenting while the single parent struggles to make ends meet, and the fact that many children lose contact with their fathers after separation or divorce, the quality of parenting is often less than that found in supportive, co-parenting relationships. Even for a person with a stable income and a network of friends and family to help with childcare, raising a child alone can be an emotional and financial burden.

Because of the nature of marriage laws in some states, LGBTQ partners are counted in some studies as single parents even when they share parenting responsibilities with their partner. More research has been conducted in recent years on parenting by lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer couples, and the results are generally favorable; living in these families appears in some respects to be better for children than living in heterosexual families. One of the areas that appears to be better is the division of parenting and household labor, which has a distinct pattern of equality and sharing among LGBTQ couples as compared with heterosexual parents. It also appears that lesbian and gay parents tend to be more responsive to their children and more child oriented in their outlook.

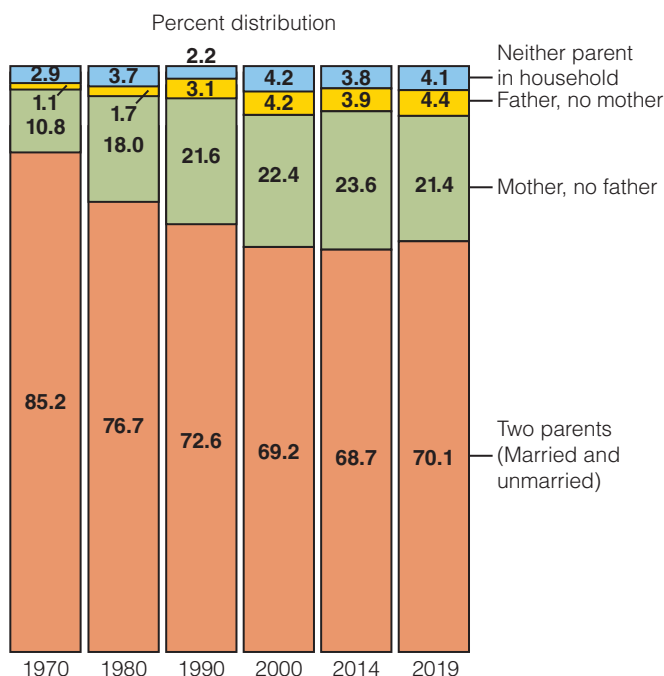


FIGURE 11.12 Living Arrangements of Children Under 18 Years Old for Selected Years, 1970–2019

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, "Historical Living Arrangements of Children," 2019.

Two-Parent Households

Between 1970 and 2019, the share of all U.S. households comprised of two parents (married and unmarried) with children under age eighteen decreased from 85.2 percent to about 70 percent. In computing these statistics for "parents," the U.S. Census Bureau includes not only biological parents but also stepparents who adopt their children. However, foster parents are considered nonrelatives.

For families in which a couple truly shares parenting, children have two primary caregivers. Some parents share parenting responsibilities by choice; others share out of necessity because both hold full-time jobs. Some studies have found that men taking an active part in raising the children is beneficial not only for mothers (who then have a little more time for other activities) but also for the men and the children. The men benefit through increased access to children and greater opportunity to be nurturing parents.

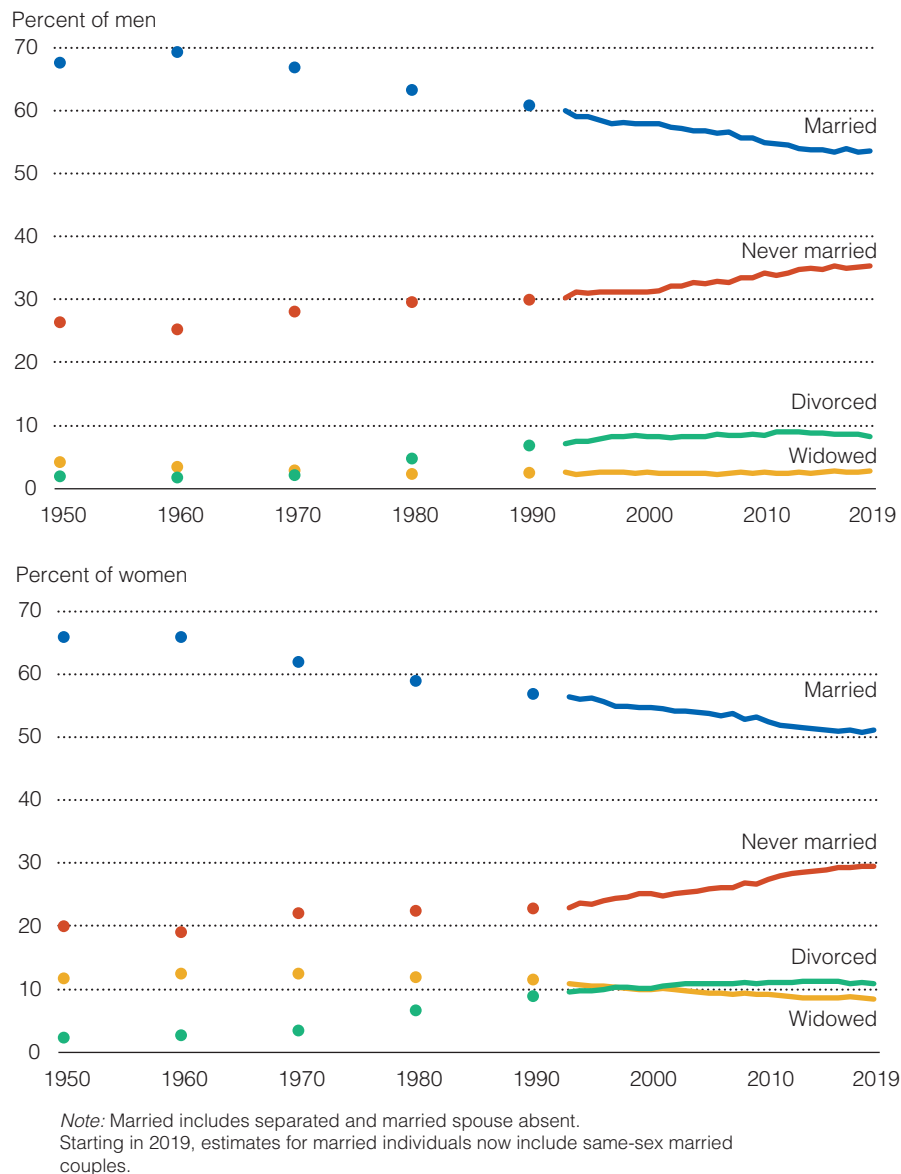


FIGURE 11.13 Men's and Women's Marital Status from 1990s to 2019

(a) Men's Marital Status

(b) Women's Marital Status

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, "Men's Marital Status (Figure MS-1a)," 2019.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, "Women's Marital Status (Figure MS-1b)," 2019.

Remaining Single

Some never-married people remain single by choice. Reasons include opportunities for a career (especially for women), the availability of sexual partners without marriage, the belief that the single lifestyle is full of excitement, and the desire for self-sufficiency and the freedom to change and experiment. Some scholars have concluded that individuals who prefer to remain single hold more individualistic values and are less family oriented than those who choose to marry. Friends and personal growth tend to be valued more highly than marriage and children.

Other never-married individuals remain single because they have not found what they consider to be a desirable

marriage partner; still others remain single out of necessity. Being single is an economic necessity for those who cannot afford to marry and set up their own household. Structural changes in the economy have limited the options of many young, working-class people. Even some college graduates have found that they cannot earn enough money to set up a household separate from that of their parents.

Estimates suggest that about 45.3 million males in the United States have never married, as compared with 40 million females. By contrast, the number of males who are married is estimated at 68.5 million, as compared with 69.25 females who are married. ■ Figure 11.13 shows the marital status of men and women between the early 1990s and 2019.

Transitions and Problems in Families

Families go through many transitions and experience a wide variety of problems, ranging from high rates of divorce and teen pregnancy to domestic abuse and family violence. These all-too-common experiences highlight two important facts about families: (1) for good or ill, families are central to our existence and (2) the reality of family life is far more complicated than the idealized image of families found in the media and in many political discussions. Moreover, as people grow older, transitions inevitably occur in family life, such as the death of a spouse.

Family Violence

Family violence refers to various forms of abuse that take place among family members, including child abuse, spousal abuse, and elder abuse. We primarily focus on domestic violence—also referred to as spousal abuse or intimate-partner violence—and elder abuse. *Domestic violence* refers to any intentional act or series of acts—whether physical, emotional, or sexual—by one or both partners in an intimate relationship that causes injury to either person. An intimate relationship might include marriage or cohabitation, as well as people who are separated or living apart from a former partner or spouse. Domestic violence is a way in which some individuals seek to establish power and control over others through the use of fear and intimidation. This type of intimate-partner violence often includes the threat or use of violence, relationship abuse, and various kinds of bullying and battering.

There are numerous causes of domestic violence, and many factors are interrelated. Factors contributing to unequal power relations in families include economic inequality, legal and political sanctions that deny girls and women equal rights, and cultural sanctions that dictate appropriate sex roles and reinforce the belief that males are inherently superior to females. Cultural factors that perpetuate domestic violence include gender-specific socialization that establishes dominant–subordinate sex roles. Economic factors include poverty or limited financial resources within families that contribute to tension and sometimes to violence. Economic factors are intertwined with women's limited access to education, employment, and income sufficient to take care of themselves and their children. Regardless of the factors that contribute to domestic violence, control is central to all forms of abuse: Gaining and maintaining control over the victim is the key factor in abuse. As a result, family violence often involves a cycle of abuse that goes on for extended periods of time.

How much do we really know about family violence? Women, as compared with men, are more likely to be the victims of violence perpetrated by intimate partners. Recent statistics indicate that one in four women and one in nine men experience severe intimate-partner physical violence, sexual violence, and/or intimate-partner stalking. More

than 60 percent of all domestic violence incidents occur at home. However, we cannot know the true extent of family violence because much of it is not reported to police. In 2019, intimate-partner violence accounted for 15 percent of all violent crime reported in this country, and 19 percent of intimate-partner violence involved a weapon (National Coalition Against Domestic Violence, 2019). The reasons that many victims of family violence do not report it to police include (1) belief that such violence is a private or personal matter, (2) fear of retaliation, (3) belief that others will view domestic violence as a “minor” crime, (4) desire to protect the offender, and (5) belief that the police will not help or will be ineffective.

Although everyone in a household where family violence occurs is harmed psychologically, whether or not they are the victims of violence, children are especially affected by household violence. It is estimated that as many as 10 million children witness some form of domestic violence in their homes each year, and there is evidence to suggest that domestic violence and child maltreatment often take place in the same household. In some situations, family violence can be reduced or eliminated through counseling, the removal of one parent from the household, or other steps that are taken either by the family or by social service or law enforcement officials. However, children who witness violence in the home may display certain emotional and behavioral problems that adversely affect their school life and communication with other people. In some families the problems of family violence are great enough that the children are removed from the household and placed in foster care.

Children in Foster Care

A special problem in families is when children must be placed in foster care either voluntarily or involuntarily. Many foster children have been in dysfunctional homes where parents or other relatives lack the ability to meet the children's daily needs. Among the top circumstances listed for a child's removal from a home is neglect, drug abuse of one or both parents, caretaker inability to cope, physical abuse, housing issues, child behavior problems, and parent incarceration (DHHS, 2019a).

Foster care refers to institutional settings or residences where adults other than a child's own parents or biological relatives serve as caregivers. States provide financial aid to foster parents, and the intent of such programs is that the children will either return to their own families or be adopted by other families. However, this is often not the case for “difficult to place” children, particularly those who are over ten years of age, have illnesses or disabilities, or are perceived as suffering from “behavioral problems.” More than 440,000 children are in foster care at any given time. This number had been declining each year since 2005 but took an upswing in 2013 and has continued to rise since. White (non-Hispanic) children constitute 44 percent of all

children in foster care, followed by African American (black) children at 23 percent, Hispanic (Latinx) at 21 percent, American Indian/Alaska Native at 2 percent, and Asian Americans at zero percent (because they only account for slightly over 2,000 of all the children in foster care). Children of two or more races make up 8 percent of the total. About 19 percent of children enter foster care at less than one year of age; however, the overall median age of children entering foster care is about six years old (DHHS, 2019a).

At any given time, more than 100,000 children are waiting to be adopted out of the foster care system, and about 60,000 are adopted with a public child welfare agency involved during each fiscal year. Other children are eventually are reunified with a parent or caregiver, go to live with other relatives, are transferred to another agency, or age out of the foster care system (DHHS, 2019a).

Divorce

Divorce is the legal process of dissolving a marriage that allows former spouses to remarry if they so choose. Most divorces today are granted on the grounds of *irreconcilable differences*, meaning that there has been a breakdown of the marital relationship for which neither partner is specifically blamed. Prior to the passage of more lenient divorce laws, many states required that the partner seeking the divorce prove misconduct on the part of the other spouse. Under *no-fault divorce laws*, however, proof of “blameworthiness” is generally no longer necessary.

The U.S. divorce rate (number of divorces per 1,000 population) has been on the decline in the twentieth and twenty-first century. It has varied from a low of 0.7 in 1900 to an all-time high of 5.3 in 1981; by 2017, it had decreased to 2.9 percent (ProQuest Statistical Abstract of the United States, 2015; Suneson, 2019). Divorce statistics may vary based on the source because some organizations include annulments in their count and a number of states no longer provide divorce statistics to national reporting agencies. ■ Figure 11.14 shows the latest available U.S. divorce rates for each state so that you can see how your state compares with others in the nation.

Although many people believe that marriage should last for a lifetime, others believe that marriage is a commitment that may change over time. Between 40 and 50 percent of new U.S. marriages will end in divorce (Cherlin, 2010). According to various studies on divorce in the United States, there are significant differences in the rates of divorce for first, second, and third marriages: The divorce rate for first marriages is between 40 and 50 percent, the rate for second marriages is 60–67 percent, and the rate for third marriages is 73–75 percent. Research has also found that couples with children have a slightly lower rate of divorce as compared to couples without children.

Financial stressors are a contributing factor to some divorces. During times of a national recession such as the one that the United States experienced beginning in

2007–2008, some people decide to remain married only until conditions change so that they can sell a house or have better financial stability when they part. However, others gain a deeper commitment to their marriage as they struggle through adversity. In recent years, the decline in the U.S. divorce rate has corresponded to the decrease in the marriage rate.

Consequences of Divorce In some families, divorce may have a dramatic economic and emotional impact on family members. In others, the effect may be more marginal. Overall, in families where one or more children are present, the children remain with their mothers and live in a single-parent household for a period of time. In recent years, there has been debate over whether children who live with their same-sex parent after divorce are better off than their peers who live with an opposite-sex parent. However, virtually no evidence has been found to support the belief that children are better off living with a same-sex parent.

Although divorce decrees provide for parental joint custody of many children, this arrangement may create unique problems. Furthermore, some children experience more than one divorce during their childhood because one or both of their parents may remarry and subsequently divorce again.

But divorce does not have to always be negative. For some people, divorce may be an opportunity to terminate destructive relationships. For others, it may represent a means to achieve personal growth by managing their lives and social relationships and establishing their own social identity. Still others choose to remarry one or more times.

Remarriage

Many people who divorce or are widowed get remarried one or more times. The proportion of adults that had married only once has decreased for both men and women, and more people have reported that they had been married two or more times.

Age is an important factor in remarriage. People who are older have had more time to see a marriage conclude and to remarry. The proportion of women and men who have married twice is higher for persons between the ages of fifty and sixty-nine.

Education levels are also a factor in both divorce and remarriage patterns. More married persons with a bachelor's degree had been married only once. Because there is a lower risk of divorce for those who have earned a bachelor's degree or more, there is less possibility of them having second or third marriages. As previously discussed, lower rates of divorce among those with more years of formal education may be related to a tendency to delay marriage and later ages at first marriage, which are associated with lower rates of marital instability.

Employment status and income are important factors in remarriage. Persons who are employed are more likely to

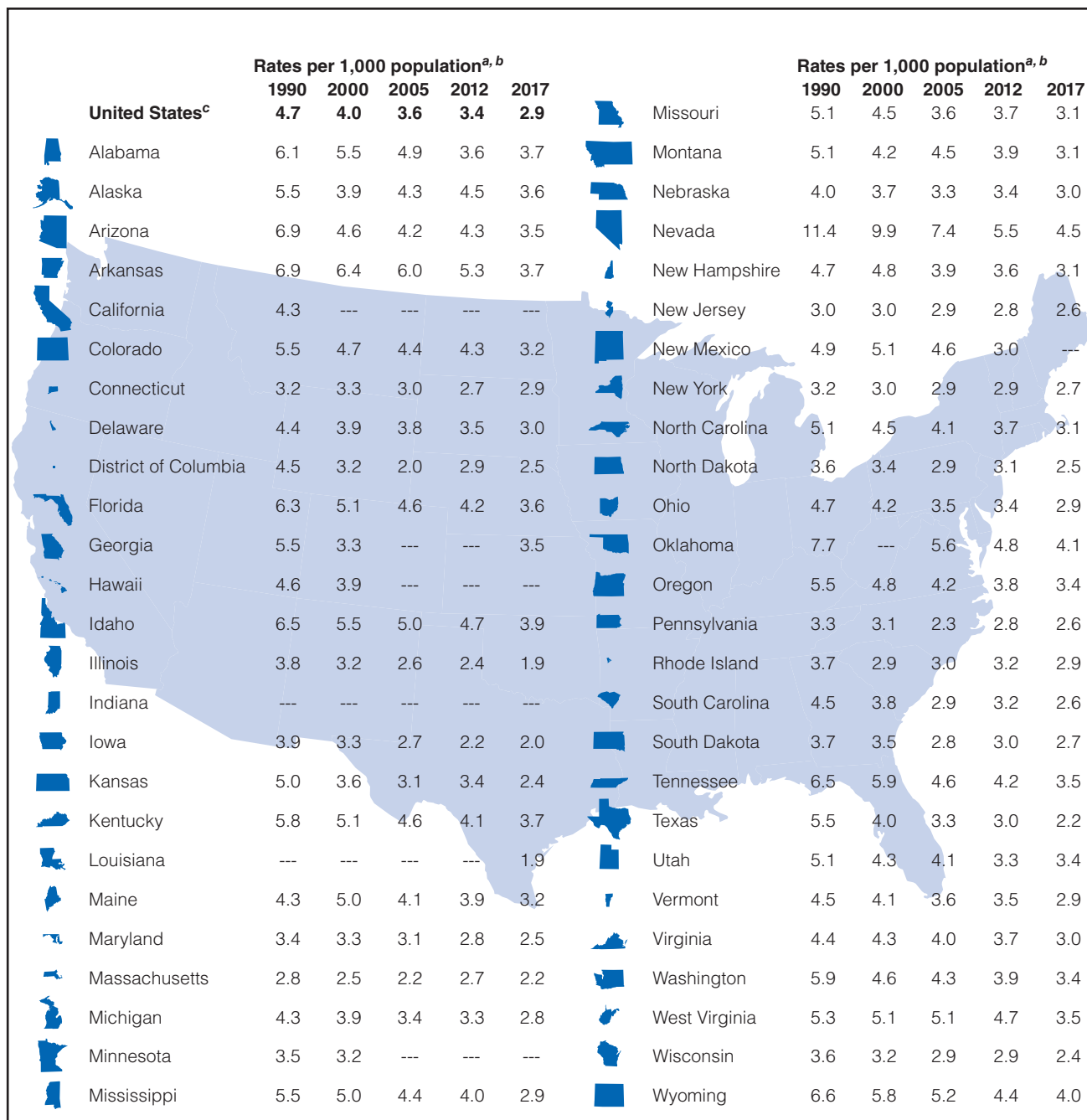


FIGURE 11.14 U.S. Divorce Rate by State, 1990–2017

NA indicates states that did not report divorce rates. U.S. divorce rates are an estimate that includes states not reporting.
Source: Suneson, 2019.

be married once and to stay married to the same partner than those who are not in the labor force. Individuals who are unemployed have a slightly higher risk of being married three or more times than those in other employment categories. Of course, unemployment often brings financial hardship, which is related to strain in marriage, higher rates of divorce, and fewer prospects of remarriage if a marriage ends. Similarly, income is related to marriage and remarriage. Adults with incomes of \$100,000 and above

are more likely to have married only once. At the other end of the income spectrum, persons living below the poverty line, as well as those receiving public assistance, are more likely to have never married and thus are less likely to have remarried.

As a result of divergent marital histories, many marriages include one or both spouses who have previously been married and/or have children and other commitments from previous marital unions. As a result of these divergent



Kayla DeJoma/PhotoEdit

FIGURE 11.15 Remarriage and blended families create new opportunities and challenges for parents and children alike.

marriage patterns, complex family relationships are often created. Some people become part of stepfamilies or *blended families*, which consist of a husband and wife, children from previous marriages, and children (if any) from the new marriage (■ Figure 11.15). At least initially, levels of family stress may be fairly high because of rivalry among the children and hostilities directed toward stepparents or babies born into the family. In spite of these problems, however, many blended families succeed. The family that results from divorce and remarriage is typically a complex, binuclear family in which children may have a biological parent and a stepparent, biological siblings and stepsiblings, and an array of other relatives, including aunts, uncles, and cousins.

The norms governing divorce and remarriage are ambiguous. Because there are no clear-cut guidelines, people must make decisions about family life (such as whom to invite for a birthday celebration or wedding) based on their beliefs and feelings about the people involved. This adds to individuals' insecurity and confusion about how to interact with others on social occasions and has contributed to the use of informal social networking technology to communicate rather than having face-to-face discussions about plans that must be made involving children, finances, or other shared concerns.

Looking Ahead: Family Issues in the Future

As we have seen, families and intimate relationships changed dramatically as we move into the third decade of the twenty-first century. Some people believe that the family as we know it is doomed. Others believe that a return to traditional family values will save this important social institution and create greater stability in society.

Current political and economic conditions constitute a threat for many families in the United States and other nations. Throughout good and bad economic times, families are important to people because the family is a vital social institution in society and often serves as the main source of support for individuals. However, in periods like the 1930s Depression, the 2008–2009 recession, or the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic, families are particularly affected by problems in

blended families

a family consisting of a husband and wife, children from previous marriages, and children (if any) from the new marriage.

the economy. Worldwide, the economies in various nations have been undergoing transformation, and job availability and stability has become a more pressing problem in the United States and other nations.

Many families experience long-term repercussions from a national or global economic crisis and the financial and emotional havoc that such crises wreak on workers and their families. For example, studies have found that individuals are feeling more tension and having more arguments with other family members because of personal fears that people have regarding unemployment, loss of housing values, mortgage foreclosures, and other personal and financial problems. It is not surprising to sociologists that families and personal relationships are affected by financial insecurity: Individuals are forced to deal with problems of low self-esteem associated with job loss and seeking new employment, and they must also focus on how to take care of their family in tough economic times.

People in the lower tiers of the U.S. class structure are confronted with problems such as these all of the time; however, this level of anxiety is somewhat new to many individuals in the middle and upper-middle classes in this country. Family problems related to economic crises are not limited to the United States; people in many countries are affected by changes in the global economy. The present

economy casts a shadow over family issues in the future. How national and global political and business leaders deal with economic issues will no doubt have an important effect on the future of families worldwide.

As previously discussed, how we view the concept of “family” is continuing to evolve in the twenty-first century. Some of these changes are already becoming evident. For example, fewer people are marrying at the same time that more men are taking an active role in raising their children and helping with household chores. More individuals rely on others who are not necessarily immediate family for friendship, emotional support, and help in times of emergency. As well, more people are cohabiting, are living in domestic partnerships, or are same-sex partners who now have the benefit of legally formalized marriages. The number of gay couples with children has doubled in the past decade, and many same-sex couples are actively parenting children.

Regardless of problems facing families today, many people still demonstrate their faith in the future by establishing families, in both the traditional and less traditional sense of the term. It will be interesting to see what people in the future decide about family relationships. What will family life be like in 2030 or 2040? What will your own family be like?

Q&A Chapter Review

Use these questions and answers to check how well you’ve achieved the learning objectives set out at the beginning of this chapter.

LO1 What characteristics do families have? What are two major types of family structures?

Characteristics of families are that they are relationships in which people live together with commitment, form an economic unit and care for any young, and consider their identity to be significantly attached to the group. Family structures are of two types: families of orientation and families of procreation. The family of orientation is the family into which a person is born. Although most people are related to members of their family of orientation by blood ties, those who are adopted have a legal tie that is patterned after a blood relationship. By contrast, the family of procreation is the family that a person forms by having or adopting children. Families are also identified by the number of generations that live within a household. An extended family is a family unit composed of relatives in addition to parents and children who live in the same household. In contrast, a nuclear family is made up of a “couple” and their dependent children, all of whom live apart from other relatives.

LO2 What are the different forms of marriage? How do patterns of descent and inheritance differ in marriages across cultures?

Marriage is a legally recognized and/or socially approved arrangement between two or more individuals that carries certain rights and obligations and usually involves sexual activity. In the United States the only legally sanctioned form of marriage is monogamy—the practice or state of being married to one person at a time. Polygamy is the concurrent marriage of a person of one sex with two or more members of the opposite sex. The most prevalent form of polygamy is polygyny—the concurrent marriage of one man with two or more women. The second type of polygamy is polyandry—the concurrent marriage of one woman with two or more men.

Although patterns of descent and inheritance differ in marriages across cultures, virtually all forms of marriage establish a system of descent so that kinship can be determined and inheritance rights established. In preindustrial societies, kinship is usually traced through one

parent (unilineally). The most common pattern of unilineal descent is patrilineal descent. Matrilineal descent is the less common pattern. Kinship in industrial societies is usually traced through both parents (bilineally). The most common form of descent is bilateral.

LO3 What are the kinds of power and authority in families?

Forms of familial power and authority that have been identified are patriarchy, matriarchy, and egalitarianism. A patriarchal family is a family structure in which authority is held by the eldest male (usually the father). A matriarchal family is a family structure in which authority is held by the eldest female (usually the mother). An egalitarian family is a family structure in which both partners share power and authority equally.

LO4 What are the major sociological perspectives on the family as a social institution?

Functionalists emphasize the importance of the family in maintaining the stability of society and the well-being of individuals. Conflict and feminist perspectives view the family as a source of social inequality and an arena for conflict. Symbolic interactionists explain family relationships in terms of the subjective meanings and everyday interpretations that people give to their lives. Postmodern analysts view families as being permeable, capable of being diffused or invaded so that their original purpose is modified.

LO5 What issues do many contemporary couples face when thinking of developing intimate relationships and establishing families?

Families are changing dramatically in the United States. Cohabitation has increased significantly in the past three decades. Among heterosexual couples, many reasons exist for cohabitation; for gay and lesbian couples, however, no alternatives to cohabitation existed in many U.S. states before the 2015 U.S. Supreme Court decision legalizing same-sex marriage. For that reason, many lesbian and gay couples sought recognition of their domestic partnerships—household partnerships in which an unmarried couple lives together in a committed, sexually intimate relationship and is granted some of the same rights and benefits as those accorded to married heterosexual couples. With the increase in dual-earner marriages, women have become larger contributors to the financial well-being of their families, but some have become increasingly burdened by the second shift—the domestic work that employed women perform at home after they complete their workday on the job.

LO6 What child-related family issues are of concern to many people in the twenty-first century?

Cultural attitudes about having children and about the ideal family size have changed dramatically in

the United States. Today, the concept of reproductive freedom includes both the desire *to have* or *not to have* one or more children. Issues of concern include teenage childbearing. Many single-parent families also exist today.

LO7 What are some of the key stressors and transitions that contribute to problems in families?

Problems in families are often related to unequal power relations such as economic problems, legal and political sanctions that deny girls and women equal rights, and cultural factors that perpetuate domestic violence. Regardless of the factors that contribute to domestic violence, control is central to all forms of abuse. Women and children are most strongly affected by family violence, although domestic violence is also perpetrated against men. However, everyone in a household where family violence occurs is harmed psychologically, and children are especially harmed. A special problem in families is when children must be placed in foster care either voluntarily or involuntarily. Foster care is often used as a safe place for children who have been in dysfunctional families, some of which are the sites of family violence, others of which are not.

LO8 What is divorce? How does it affect remarriage patterns in the United States?

Divorce is the legal process of dissolving a marriage. At the macrolevel, changes in social institutions may contribute to an increase in divorce rates; at the microlevel, factors contributing to divorce include age at marriage, length of acquaintanceship, economic resources, education level, and parental marital happiness. Remarriage often occurs following divorce. Many people who divorce or are widowed get remarried one or more times. Sometimes remarriage produces complex family relationships such as blended families where stress may be fairly high due to rivalries among family members who are in the process of learning to live together.

LO9 What are some pressing family issues in contemporary and future times?

Now and in the future, a major factor that affects families is economic conditions both within the household and larger economic concerns on a nation and global basis. These larger issues affect people's educational and job opportunities, living (or nonliving) wages, availability of affordable housing, and numerous other personal and social issues. In the future, families who continue to grapple with issues such as the roles of women and men in child and household care, bringing in income for the family, and the global economy become even more important in their everyday lives.

Key Terms

bilateral descent 318	family of orientation 316	nuclear family 316
blended family 337	family of procreation 316	patriarchal family 318
cohabitation 323	homogamy 324	patrilineal descent 318
domestic partnerships 324	kinship 315	patrilocal residence 319
dual-earner marriages 326	marriage 317	polyandry 318
egalitarian family 318	matriarchal family 318	polygamy 317
endogamy 319	matrilineal descent 318	polygyny 317
exogamy 319	matrilocal residence 319	second shift 326
extended family 316	monogamy 317	sociology of family 319
families 315	neolocal residence 319	

Questions for Critical Thinking

- 1 In your opinion, what constitutes an ideal family? How might functionalist, conflict, feminist, and symbolic interactionist perspectives describe this family?
- 2 Suppose that you wanted to find out about people's perceptions about love and marriage. What specific issues might you examine? What would be the best way to conduct your research?
- 3 You have been appointed to a presidential commission on childcare problems in the United States. How to provide high-quality childcare at affordable prices is a key issue for the first meeting. What kinds of suggestions would you take to the meeting? How do you think your suggestions should be funded? How does the future look for children in high-, middle-, and low-income families in the United States?

Answers to **Sociology Quiz**

Contemporary Trends in U.S. Family Life

1	False	A Gallup poll found that more than half (65 percent) of U.S. adults say that having a baby outside of marriage is "morally acceptable."
2	False	The same Gallup poll found 69 percent of U.S. adults say sex between an unmarried woman and man is "morally acceptable." However, adultery is still widely condemned.
3	True	For the first time in over 160 years, the number of people living in the average U.S. household is going up. Data from the U.S. Census Bureau show that in 2018, there were 2.63 people per household, as compared to 2.58 in 2010. More people are residing in multigenerational family households and more are "doubled up" in shared living quarters, contributing to this statistical increase in the size of households.
4	True	Yes, multigenerational households are increasing. A record high of 64 million Americans (one in five) now live in multigenerational households. Growing U.S. racial and ethnic diversity explains some of the rise in multigenerational living: Asian American and Hispanic (Latinx) populations are growing more rapidly than the white population, and persons in those categories are more likely than whites to live in multigenerational family households.
5	False	More than half of single mothers who choose to raise their children alone are employed, and most single mothers do not receive government assistance.
6	True	U.S. Census Bureau data show that most U.S. children (70.1 percent) under age eighteen live in households with both parents present. This count includes parents who are married and parents who are unmarried.
7	False	The latest available figures (2017) show that divorce rates per 1,000 population in the United States are decreasing. For example, they went down from 3.4 per 1,000 in 2012 to 2.9 per 1,000 in 2017. Experts suggest that this lower rate of divorce may be related to the fact that fewer people are getting married in the United States.
8	True	Yes, even though there has been a decline in the birthrate for adolescent females ages 15–19 in recent years, the United States still has a higher birthrate per 1,000 adolescent females than many other developed nations, such as Canada and the United Kingdom.

Sources: Based on Cohn and Passel, 2018; Earls, 2018; Fry, 2019; U.S. Census Bureau, Table C2, "Household Relationship and Living Arrangements of Children Under 18 Years, by Age and Sex, 2019;" U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2019; and Wolf, 2019.



Education and Religion

12

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- 1 Discuss** education and religion as important areas of sociological inquiry in contemporary societies.
- 2 Compare** the major sociological perspectives on education.
- 3 Discuss** the major problems faced by elementary and secondary schools in the United States.
- 4 Discuss** the key challenges associated with college education in the United States.
- 5 Discuss** perspectives on religion and the major categories of religion.
- 6 Compare** the major sociological perspectives on religion.
- 7 Describe** the major types of religious organizations.
- 8 Describe** the major trends in religion in the United States.
- 9 Discuss** education and religion in the United States from contemporary and future perspectives.

Andy Cross/Denver Post/Getty Images

SOCIOLOGY & **Everyday Life**

The Endless Controversy in Schools

Here's what I remember from biology class at my public high school in Texas: We learned everything there is to know about the Krebs cycle. We collected bugs in the heat and suffocated them in jars of nail-polish remover. We did not, to my recollection, learn much of anything about how the human species originated.

—Olga Khazan, a journalist, describing how she, along with many other students in the United States, never learned about human evolution

Despite a lengthy history of being struck down in courts, bills permitting the teaching of “creation science” in public schools continue to appear in state legislatures across the country. . . . Within the past few years, a number of state legislatures have introduced bills permitting schools to “teach the controversy” between the theories of evolution and creationism. Somehow, an issue the Supreme Court of the United States resolved three decades ago is still very much alive and contentious today.

—Megan Elizabeth Sullivan, an attorney who writes for the *New England Law Review*, highlighting how “alternative facts” have found their way into public school classrooms when it comes to teaching creationism and evolution



For many years, people—including the parents shown here at a local parent–teacher organization meeting—have argued about what should (or should not) be taught in U.S. public schools. One issue of key concern has been the teaching of creationism or intelligent design, as contrasted with evolution. What do you think these controversies are really about? Why do some debates about school curriculum eventually become lawsuits?

What is all the controversy about? Why has the debate about teaching creationism/intelligent design versus evolution, or “teaching the controversy” itself, involving both viewpoints, continued for so many years? The argument over *creationism*—the belief that the universe and living organisms originated from specific acts of divine creation, as recorded in the biblical account, rather than by natural processes such as evolution, has gone on for a century. Evolutionism versus creationism was hotly debated in the famous 1925 “Scopes monkey trial,” so named because of Charles Darwin’s assertion that human beings had evolved from lower primates. In this case, John Thomas Scopes, a substitute high school biology teacher in Tennessee, was found guilty of teaching evolution. Although an appeals court later overturned the conviction of Scopes and dismissed his \$100 fine, teaching evolution in Tennessee’s public schools remained illegal until 1967. By contrast, more recent U.S. Supreme Court rulings have looked unfavorably on the teaching of creationism in public schools, based on a provision in the Constitution that requires a “wall of separation” between church (religion) and state (government).

The argument over teaching *intelligent design*—an assertion that the universe is so complex that an intelligent, supernatural power

must have created it—as an alternative to the theory of creationism is one of the later debates in public schools. Another argument that has gained strength during the Trump administration is the belief that schools should “teach the controversy,” meaning that educators should be allowed to teach creationism and the theory of evolution simultaneously. However, the U.S. Supreme Court and a number of state courts have uniformly ruled that teaching intelligent design is also a violation of the First Amendment’s Establishment Clause, which prohibits the enactment of any law respecting an establishment of religion (Sullivan, 2019). These arguments regarding the appropriate relationship between public education and religion in the United States will no doubt continue long into the future.

As this example shows, religion can be a highly controversial topic. One group’s deeply held beliefs or cherished religious practices may be a source of irritation to another. Today, religion is a source of both stability and conflict not only in the United States but throughout the world. In this chapter we examine how religion influences education and everyday life. Before reading on, test your knowledge about how religion affects public education in the United States by taking the “Sociology and Everyday Life” quiz. ●

How Much Do You Know About the Effects of Religion on U.S. Education?

TRUE	FALSE	
T	F	1 The U.S. Constitution originally specified that religion should be taught in public schools.
T	F	2 Virtually all sociologists have advocated the separation of moral teaching from academic subject matter.
T	F	3 The federal government has limited control over how funds are spent by school districts because most of the money comes from the state and local levels.
T	F	4 Private school enrollment nationwide has increased significantly in the 2010s because parents do not want their children to be exposed to teachings in public schools.
T	F	5 Studies have found that the religious affiliation of schoolchildren may be unrelated to their religious affiliation as adults.
T	F	6 Debates over textbook content focus only on elementary education because of the vulnerability of young children.
T	F	7 More parents are instructing their own children through homeschooling because of their concerns about what public schools are (or are not) teaching their children.
T	F	8 The U.S. Congress has the ultimate authority over whether religious education can be included in public school curricula.

Answers can be found at the end of the chapter.

An Overview of Education and Religion

Education and religion are powerful and influential forces in contemporary societies. Both institutions impart values, beliefs, and knowledge considered essential to the social reproduction of individual personalities and entire cultures (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990). Education and religion both grapple with issues of societal stability and social change, reflecting society even as they attempt to shape it. Education and religion also share certain commonalities as objects of sociological study; for example, both are socializing institutions. Whereas early socialization is primarily informal and takes place within our families and friendship networks, as we grow older, socialization passes to the more formalized organizations created for the specific purposes of education and religion.

Areas of sociological inquiry that specifically focus on those institutions are (1) the *sociology of education*, which primarily examines formal education or schooling in

industrial societies, and (2) the *sociology of religion*, which focuses on religious groups and organizations, on the behavior of individuals within those groups, and on ways in which religion is intertwined with other social institutions. Let's start our examination by looking at sociological perspectives on education.

Sociological Perspectives on Education

Education is the social institution responsible for the systematic transmission of knowledge, skills, and cultural values within a formally organized structure. In all societies, people must acquire certain knowledge and skills in

education

the social institution responsible for the systematic transmission of knowledge, skills, and cultural values within a formally organized structure.

order to survive. In less-developed societies, these skills might include hunting, gathering, fishing, farming, and self-preservation. In contemporary, developed societies, knowledge and skills are often related to the requirements of a highly competitive job market.

Sociologists have divergent perspectives on the purpose of education in contemporary society. Here, we examine functionalist, conflict, symbolic interactionist, and postmodernist approaches to analyzing schooling.

Functionalist Perspectives on Education

Functionalists view education as one of the most important components of society. According to Emile Durkheim, education is the “influence exercised by adult generations on those that are not yet ready for social life” (1956: 28). Durkheim asserted that moral values are the foundation of a cohesive social order and that schools have the responsibility to teach a commitment to the common morality.

From this perspective, students must be taught to put the group’s needs ahead of their individual desires and aspirations. Contemporary functionalists suggest that education is responsible for teaching U.S. values. However, not all analysts agree on what those values should be or what functions that education should serve in contemporary societies. In analyzing the values and functions of education, sociologists using a functionalist framework distinguish between manifest and latent functions. Manifest functions and latent functions of education are compared in ■ Figure 12.1.

Manifest Functions of Education Some functions of education are *manifest functions*, previously defined as the open, stated, and intended goals or consequences of activities within an organization or institution. Examples of manifest functions in education include teaching specific subjects, such as science, mathematics, reading, history, and English. Education serves five major manifest functions in society:

1. **Socialization.** From kindergarten through college, schools teach students the student role, specific academic subjects, and political socialization. In primary and secondary schools, students are taught specific subject matter appropriate to their age, skill level, and previous educational experience. At the college level, students focus on more detailed knowledge of subjects that they have previously studied while also being exposed to new areas of study and research.
2. **Transmission of culture.** Schools transmit cultural norms and values to each new generation and play an active part in the process of assimilation, whereby recent immigrants learn dominant cultural values, attitudes, and behavior so that they can be productive members of society.
3. **Social control.** Schools are responsible for teaching values such as discipline, respect, obedience, punctuality, and perseverance. Schools teach conformity by encouraging young people to be good students, conscientious future workers, and law-abiding citizens.

Manifest functions—open, stated, and intended goals or consequences of activities within an organization or institution. In education, these are:



- socialization
- transmission of culture
- social control
- social placement
- change and innovation

Latent functions—hidden, unstated, and sometimes unintended consequences of activities within an organization. In education, these include:



- matchmaking and production of social networks
- restricting some activities
- creating a generation gap

FIGURE 12.1 Manifest and Latent Functions of Education

4. *Social placement.* Schools are responsible for identifying the most qualified people to fill available positions in society. As a result, students are channeled into programs based on individual ability and academic achievement. Graduates receive the appropriate credentials for entry into the paid labor force.
5. *Change and innovation.* Schools are a source of change and innovation. As student populations change over time, new programs are introduced to meet societal needs; for example, sex education, drug education, and multicultural studies have been implemented in some schools to help students learn about pressing social issues. Innovation in the form of new knowledge is required of colleges and universities. Faculty members are encouraged, and sometimes required, to engage in research and to share the results with students, colleagues, and others.

Latent Functions of Education In addition to manifest functions, all social institutions, including education, have some *latent functions*, which, as you will recall, are the hidden, unstated, and sometimes unintended consequences of activities within an organization or institution. Education serves at least three latent functions:

1. *Restricting some activities.* Early in the twentieth century, all states passed *mandatory education laws* that require children to attend school until they reach a specified age or until they complete a minimum level of formal education. Out of these laws grew one latent function of education, which is to keep students off the streets and out of the full-time job market for a number of years, thus helping keep crime and unemployment within reasonable bounds.
2. *Matchmaking and production of social networks.* Because schools bring together people of similar ages, social class, and race/ethnicity, young people often meet future marriage partners and develop social networks that may last for many years.
3. *Creating a generation gap.* Students may learn information in school that contradicts beliefs held by their parents or their religion. When education conflicts with parental attitudes and beliefs, a generation gap is created if students embrace the newly acquired perspective.

As we have seen, education fulfills both manifest and latent functions in society; however, some aspects of this important social institution may be impaired and generate problems not only for students but also for others in the larger society (such as lagging educational standards that result in employees coming into the workforce with fewer marketable skills).

Dysfunctions of Education Functionalists acknowledge that education has certain dysfunctions. Some analysts argue that U.S. education is not promoting the high-level

skills in reading, writing, science, and mathematics that are needed in the workplace and the global economy. For example, science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) education in the United States does not compare favorably with that found in many other industrialized countries. For most functionalist thinkers, inadequate enrollment in important courses that contribute to individual employment opportunities and sustained growth and stability of the U.S. economy is a sign that larger dysfunctions exist in the nation's educational system. According to this approach, improvements will occur only when more stringent academic requirements are implemented for students and when teachers receive sufficient training. Overall, functionalists typically advocate the importance of establishing a more rigorous academic environment in which students are required to learn the basics that will make them competitive in school and in job markets.

Conflict Perspectives on Education

In contrast with the functionalist perspective, conflict theorists argue that schools often perpetuate class, racial-ethnic, and gender inequalities as some groups seek to maintain their privileged position at the expense of others.

Cultural Capital and Class Reproduction Although many factors—including intelligence, motivation, and previous achievement—are important in determining how much education a person will attain, conflict theorists argue that access to quality education is closely related to social class. From this approach, education is a vehicle for reproducing existing class relationships. According to French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, the school legitimates and reinforces the social elites by engaging in specific practices that uphold the patterns of behavior and the attitudes of the dominant class. Bourdieu asserts that students from diverse class backgrounds come to school with differing amounts of *cultural capital*—social assets that include values, beliefs, attitudes, and competencies in language and culture (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990). Cultural capital involves “proper” attitudes toward education, socially approved dress and manners, and knowledge about books, art, music, and other forms of high and popular culture (■ Figure 12.2).

Middle- and upper-income parents endow their children with more cultural capital than do working-class and poverty-level parents. Because cultural capital is essential for acquiring an education, children with less cultural capital have fewer opportunities to succeed in school. For example, standardized tests that are used to group students by ability and to assign them to classes often measure students'

cultural capital

Pierre Bourdieu's term for people's social assets, including values, beliefs, attitudes, and competencies in language and culture.



Robert Landau/Alamy Stock Photo

FIGURE 12.2 Children who are able to visit museums, such as the Museum of Natural History in Los Angeles shown here, and engage in other cultural activities such as visiting libraries and attending musical events may gain cultural capital that other children do not possess. What is cultural capital? Why is it important in the process of class reproduction?

cultural capital rather than their “natural” intelligence or aptitude. Thus, a circular effect occurs: Students with dominant cultural values are more highly rewarded by the educational system. In turn, the educational system teaches and reinforces those values that sustain the elite’s position in society.

Tracking and Detracking Closely linked to the issue of cultural capital is how tracking in schools is related to social inequality. **Tracking** refers to the practice of assigning students to specific curriculum groups and courses on the basis of their test scores, previous grades, or other criteria. Conflict theorists believe that tracking seriously affects many students’ educational performance and their overall academic accomplishments. In elementary schools, tracking is often referred to as *ability grouping* and is based on the assumption that it is easier to teach a group of students who have similar abilities. However, class-based factors also affect which children are most likely to be placed in “high,” “middle,” or “low” groups, often referred to by such innocuous terms as “Circles” and “Squares.” This practice, which has gone on for many years, was described by journalist Ruben Navarrette, Jr. (1997: 274–275), who tells us about his own experience with tracking:

One fateful day, in the second grade, my teacher decided to teach her class more efficiently by dividing it into six groups of five students each. Each group was assigned a geometric symbol to differentiate it from the others. There were the Circles. There were the Squares. There were the Triangles and Rectangles. I remember being a Hexagon. . . . I remember something else, an odd coincidence. The Hexagons were the smartest kids in the class. These distinctions

are not lost on a child of seven. . . . Even in the second grade, my classmates and I knew who was smarter than whom. And on the day on which we were assigned our respective shapes, we knew that our teacher knew, too. As Hexagons, we would wait for her to call on us, then answer by hurrying to her with books and pencils in hand. We sat around a table in our “reading group,” chattering excitedly to one another and basking in the intoxication of positive learning. We did not notice, did not care to notice, over our shoulders, the frustrated looks on the faces of Circles and Squares and Triangles who sat quietly at their desks, doodling on scratch paper or mumbling to one another. We knew also that, along with our geometric shapes, our books were different and that each group had different amounts of work to do. . . . The Circles had the easiest books and were assigned to read only a few pages at a time. . . . Not surprisingly, the Hexagons had the most difficult books of all, those with the biggest words and the fewest pictures, and we were expected to read the most pages.

The result of all of this education by separation was exactly what the teacher had imagined that it would be: Students could, and did, learn at their own pace without being encumbered by one another. Some learned faster than others. Some, I realized only [later], did not learn at all.

As Navarrette suggests, tracking does make it possible for students to work together based on their perceived abilities and at their own pace; however, it also extracts a serious toll from students who are labeled as “underachievers” or “slow learners.” However, as he also points out, race, class, language, gender, and many other social categories may determine the placement of children in elementary tracking systems as much or more than their actual academic abilities and interests. Today, Ruben Navarrette, Jr. is a nationally recognized syndicated newspaper columnist and blogger who writes on many important social and political issues facing our nation and the world.

The practice of tracking often continues in middle school/junior high and high school. Although schools in some communities bring together students from diverse economic and racial-ethnic backgrounds, the students do not necessarily take the same courses, move on the same academic career paths, or have the same opportunities even when they attend the same school. More recently, tracking has involved grouping students by ability within subjects. This has led to the development and rapid expansion of Advanced Placement courses, which are favored by parents of higher-performing students because they believe their children will achieve more and receive higher honors than in courses designed for “average” students.

The *detracking movement*—which emphasizes that students should be deliberately placed in classes of mixed



martindoucat/E+/Getty Images

FIGURE 12.3 As Ruben Navarrette, Jr. so powerfully describes, school is extremely tedious for underachieving students, who may find themselves “tracked” in such a way as to deny them upward mobility in the future.

ability to improve their academic performance and test scores—influenced a growing number of educators for a period of time. Detracking is based on the assumption that intensifying the secondary school curricula may help close the achievement gap among students, particularly those dimensions that are based on class or race/ethnicity. However, detracking was a major concern for parents of high-achieving students: They often believe their children are losing out because lower-achieving students are in their courses. According to their perspective, high-achieving students should have classes that maximize their potential rather than hold them back with less able or less talented students. As new academic standards, statewide exams, and accountability requirements were placed on public schools, detracking lost ground to the idea that high-achieving students should be allowed to achieve their full potential and other efforts should be put in place to improve the accomplishments of previously lower-achieving students (■ Figure 12.3). Overall, in the 2010s, it appears that modified tracking by academic subject has become the mainstream strategy for organizing curriculum and teaching in most U.S. schools.

The Hidden Curriculum and Inequality According to conflict theorists, the *hidden curriculum* is the transmission

of cultural values and attitudes, such as conformity and obedience to authority, through implied demands found in the rules, routines, and regulations of schools. In other words, through the experience of being in school, students pick up on subtle messages about attitudes, beliefs, values, and behavior that are either “appropriate” or “inappropriate” from teachers and other school personnel. These messages are not part of the official curriculum or the school’s mission to educate students for the future.

Although all students are subjected to the hidden curriculum, students who are from low-income families and/or are African American or Hispanic (Latinx) may be affected the most adversely by educational settings that have been established on the basis of upper- and middle-class white (non-Hispanic) values, attitudes, and behavior.

tracking

the assignment of students to specific curriculum groups and courses on the basis of their test scores, previous grades, or other criteria.

hidden curriculum

the transmission of cultural values and attitudes, such as conformity and obedience to authority, through implied demands found in the rules, routines, and regulations of schools.

When teachers from middle- and upper-middle-class backgrounds instruct students from lower-income families, the teachers often establish a more structured classroom and a more controlling environment for students (• Figure 12.4). These teachers may also have lower expectations for students' academic achievements. Schools with many students from low-income families often emphasize procedures and rote memorization without focusing on decision making and choice or on providing explanations of why something is done a particular way. Schools for middle-class students stress the processes (such as figuring and decision making) involved in getting the right answer. Schools for affluent students focus on creative activities in which students express their own ideas and apply them to the subject under consideration, as well as building students' analytical and critical-thinking skills.

Over time, students may become frustrated with the educational system and drop out or become very marginal students, making it even more difficult for them to attend

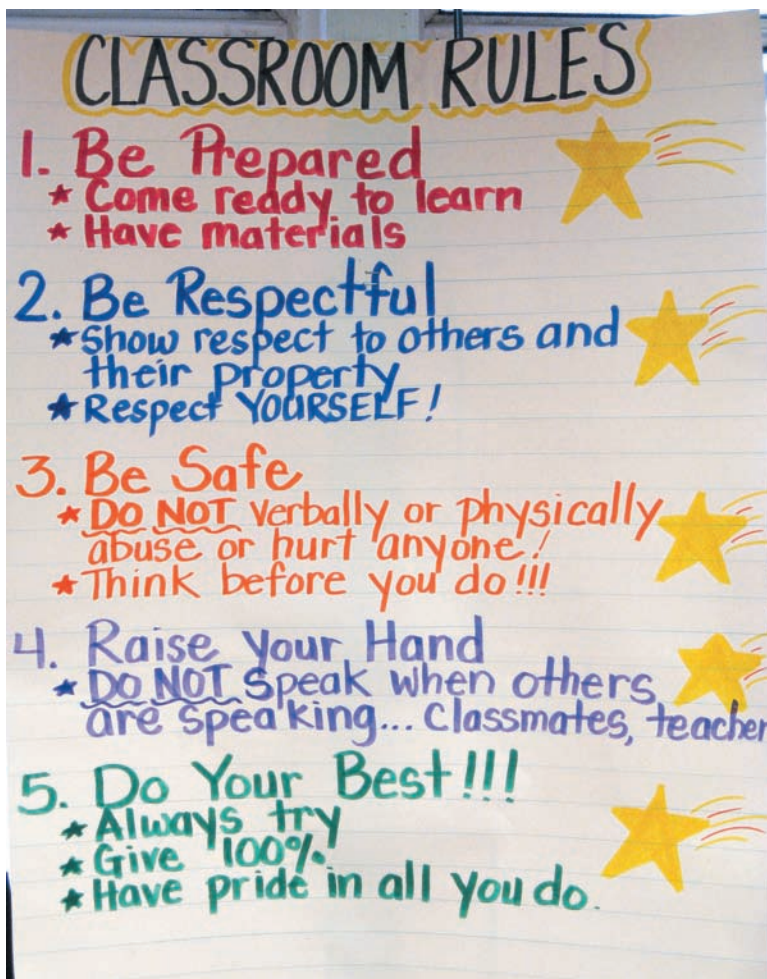
college and achieve the appropriate credentials for gaining better-paying jobs. Educational credentials are extremely important in a nation such as ours that emphasizes **credentialism**—a process of social selection in which class advantage and social status are linked to the possession of academic qualifications. Credentialism is closely related to *meritocracy*—a social system in which status is assumed to be acquired through individual ability and effort. Persons who acquire the appropriate credentials for a job are assumed to have gained the position through what they know, not who they are or whom they know. According to conflict theorists, the hidden curriculum determines in advance that the most valued credentials will primarily stay in the hands of the middle and upper classes, so the United States is not actually as meritocratic as some might claim.

The hidden curriculum is also related to gender bias. For many years, the focus in education was on how gender bias harmed girls and women: Reading materials, classroom activities, and treatment by teachers and peers

contributed to a feeling among many girls and young women that they were less important than male students. The accepted wisdom was that, over time, differential treatment undermines females' self-esteem and discourages them from taking certain courses, such as math and science, which have been dominated by male teachers and students. In the early 1990s the American Association of University Women issued *The AAUW Report: How Schools Shortchange Girls* (1995), which highlighted inequalities in women's education and started a national debate on gender equity. Over the past twenty years, improvements have occurred in girls' educational achievement, as females have attended and graduated from high school and college at a higher rate than their male peers. More females have enrolled in Advanced Placement or honors courses and in academic areas, such as math and science, where they had previously lagged.

Ironically, after many years of discussion about how the hidden curriculum and other problems in schools served to disadvantage female students, the emphasis has now shifted to the question of whether girls' increasing accomplishments from elementary school to college and beyond have come at the expense of boys and young men. But educational achievement does not need to be viewed as a "zero-sum game," in which one group's gain results in a corresponding loss for the other.

Regardless of gender, large differences remain in scores on academic tests among students by race/ethnicity. Studies have shown that white (non-Hispanic) children are more likely to graduate from high school and college than are their African American and Hispanic



Richard Mittleman/Alamy Stock Photo

FIGURE 12.4 Signs such as this found in elementary classrooms list the rules, and sometimes the rewards and consequences, of different types of student behavior. According to conflict theorists, schools impose rules on working-class and poverty-level students so that they will learn to follow orders and to be good employees in the workplace.

peers. Likewise, children from higher-income families are more likely to graduate from a four-year college or university than are children from lower-income families, who are also less likely to attend a four-year college at all.

The conflict theorists' focus on the hidden curriculum calls our attention to the fact that students learn far more—both positively and negatively—than just the subject matter that is being taught in classrooms. Students are exposed to a wide range of beliefs, values, attitudes, and behavioral expectations that are not directly related to specific subject matter.

Symbolic Interactionist Perspectives on Education

Unlike functionalist analysts, who focus on the functions and dysfunctions of education, and conflict theorists, who focus on the relationship between education and inequality, symbolic interactionists focus on classroom communication patterns and educational practices, such as labeling, which affect students' self-concept and aspirations.

Labeling and the Self-Fulfilling Prophecy According to symbolic interactionists, the process of labeling is directly related to the power and status of those persons who do the labeling and those who are being labeled. Chapter 6 explains that *labeling* is the process whereby a person is identified by others as possessing a specific characteristic or exhibiting a certain pattern of behavior (such as being deviant). In schools, teachers and administrators are empowered to label children in various ways, including grades, written comments on deportment (classroom behavior), and placement in classes. For some students, labeling amounts to a *self-fulfilling prophecy*—previously defined as an unsubstantiated belief or prediction resulting in behavior that makes the originally false belief come true (Merton, 1968).

A classic form of labeling and the self-fulfilling prophecy may occur through the use of IQ (intelligence quotient) tests, which claim to measure a person's inherent intelligence, apart from any family or school influences on the individual. In many school systems, IQ tests are used as one criterion in determining student placement in classes and ability groups (see ■ Figure 12.5). The way in which IQ test scores may become a self-fulfilling prophecy was revealed in the 1960s when two social scientists conducted an experiment in an elementary school during which they intentionally misinformed teachers that some of the students had extremely high IQ test scores whereas others had average to below-average scores. As the researchers observed, the teachers began to teach “exceptional” students in a different manner from other students. In turn, the “exceptional” students began to outperform their “average” peers and to excel in their classwork. This study called attention to the labeling effect of IQ scores.

Question 2: Consider the following two statements: all farmers who are also ranchers cannot come near town; and most of the ranchers who are also farmers cannot surf. Which of the following statements MUST be true?

- ☐ Most of the farmers who cannot come near town can surf
- ☐ Only some farmers who ranch can surf near town
- ☐ A surfer who ranches and farms cannot surf near town
- ☐ Some ranchers who farm can come to town to learn to surf
- ☐ Any farmer who cannot surf also ranches

FIGURE 12.5 IQ Test Sample Question

IQ tests containing questions such as this are often used to place students in ability groups. Placement can set the course of a person's entire education.

Today, so-called IQ fundamentalists continue to label students and others on the basis of IQ tests, claiming that these tests measure some identifiable trait that predicts the quality of people's thinking and their ability to perform. Critics of IQ tests continue to argue that these exams measure a number of factors—including motivation, home environment, type of socialization at home, and quality of schooling—not intelligence alone.

Postmodernist Perspectives on Education

How might a postmodern approach describe higher education? One of the major postmodern theorists is Jean-Francois Lyotard (1984), who described how knowledge has become a commodity that is exchanged between producers and consumers. “Knowledge” is now an automated database, and teaching and learning are primarily about data presentation, stripped of their former humanistic and spiritual associations.

In the postmodern era an emphasis in higher education is on how to make colleges and universities more efficient and how to bring these institutions into the service of business and industry. A major objective is looking for the best way to transform these schools into corporate entities such as the “McUniversity,” which refers to a means of educational consumption that allows students to consume educational services, to eventually obtain “goods” such as degrees and credentials, and to think of themselves and their parents as consumers. The rapidly increasing cost of higher education has contributed to the perception of “McUniversity” and to the idea of students as consumers.

Savvy college and university administrators are aware of the permeability of higher education and the “students-as-consumers” model. To attract new students and enhance

credentialism

a process of social selection in which class advantage and social status are linked to the possession of academic qualifications.



AP Images/Newsphoto Member/Laramie Daily Boomerang/Jeremy Martin

FIGURE 12.6 To attract new students, some college campuses have amenities such as rock-climbing walls.

current students' opportunities for consumption, most campuses have amenities such as spacious food courts with many franchise choices, ATMs, video games on gigantic HDTV screens, Olympic-sized swimming pools, and massive rock-climbing walls (■ Figure 12.6). Wi-fi-enabled campuses are also a necessity for student consumers, and virtual classrooms and online courses make it possible for some students to earn college credit without having to look for a parking place at the traditional brick-and-mortar campus.

Based on a postmodern approach, what do you believe will be the dominant means by which future students will consume educational services and goods at your college or university? For many, the digital age will continue to rapidly transform what we think of as knowledge and the social institution of education in which people consume new information. College students and many other tech-savvy persons find information online by searching in a purposeful but somewhat random and sporadic manner because of the way in which hyperlinked sources send users nomadically searching from site to site. This postmodern approach to learning has been referred to as the "rhizomatic model of learning," which refers to a rhizomatic plant: a plant that has no center or defined boundaries but instead has a number of semi-independent nodes that are capable of growing and spreading individually within the boundaries of a specific habitat (Cormier, 2008). Based on this analogy, knowledge is increasingly nonhierarchical, is open ended, and involves the "wisdom of the crowds," in which large communities of online users find meaning and identify what is important to learn from what initially might appear to be random searching in cyberspace.

If this approach to knowledge and the process of education becomes the norm, a specific curriculum determined by experts will become irrelevant, and people will begin to identify and legitimize for themselves what is important to know and the significance of the work they are doing.

As Cormier (2008) stated, "The community, then, has the power to create knowledge within a given context and leave that knowledge as a new node connected to the rest of the network." Do you think that this postmodern approach is more useful in analyzing how education in the future may take place in traditional fields of study with long-accepted knowledge and accepted "experts" or in looking at new and developing fields that are now emerging in the digital age?

Problems in Elementary and Secondary Schools

Education in kindergarten through high school is a microcosm of many of the issues and problems facing the United States. The problems we address in this section include unequal funding of public schools, high dropout rates, racial segregation and resegregation, and competition for public schools in the form of school choice, charter schools, and homeschooling.

Unequal Funding of Public Schools

Why does unequal funding exist in public schools? Most educational funds come from state legislative appropriations and local property taxes (see ■ Figure 12.7). Some legislatures provide far fewer funds for schools in their state because they have fewer resources or because they have other political priorities. The same is true for local communities. Some cities have properties that are much more expensive than others. Other cities have large amounts of land that is under the control of various levels of the government and thus not subject to school taxation. All of this adds up to unequal funding for public schools. As shown in Figure 12.7, in the 2017–2018 school year, state sources contributed 47 percent of public elementary–secondary school system revenue, 45 percent came from local sources, and 8 percent came from federal sources (National Center

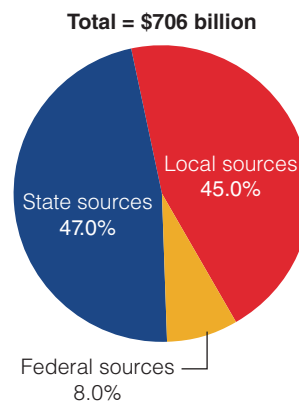


FIGURE 12.7 Percentage Distribution of Total Public Elementary–Secondary School System Revenue, 2017–2018

Source: Author's compilation of data from National Center for Educational Statistics, 2019.

for Educational Statistics [NCES], 2019a). Federal sources of revenue to schools have continued to decrease in the 2010s, and much of the money that is allocated is earmarked for special programs for students who are disadvantaged (e.g., the Head Start program) or who have a disability.

School Dropouts

High dropout rates are a major problem facing contemporary schools. Dropout rates are computed in various ways, but one of the most telling is the *status dropout rate*—the percentage of people in a specific age range who are not currently enrolled in high school and who do not have a high school degree or its equivalent. Status dropout rates vary by gender and race/ethnicity (see ■ Figure 12.8). Males of all races and ethnicities (6.6 percent) have a higher status dropout rate than females (5.0 percent). However, status dropout rates vary by race/ethnicity: Hispanics/Latinx (9.5 percent) and blacks/African Americans (5.7 percent) have higher status dropout rates than whites (4.6 percent) (NCES, 2019a).

Using a second approach to determine dropout rates, the *event dropout rate*—which estimates the percentage of both public and private high school students who left high school between the beginning of one school year and the beginning of the next without earning a high school diploma or an alternative credential such as a GED—we find that every school day, more than 7,000 U.S. students (on average) leave high school and never return. Perhaps the most telling statistic when using the event dropout rate is that students living in low-income families are about five times more likely to drop out in any given year than are students living in high-income families (NCES, 2019a).

Dropping out of school produces serious economic and social consequences for individuals and nations. There is substantial evidence that education levels are related to earnings. Young people without a high school education not only have a difficult time finding work that will pay a

living wage, but when they are employed, they also make far less than individuals with at least a high school diploma. A higher percentage of dropouts (age twenty-five and over) are also unemployed or holding temporary or part-time jobs while seeking full-time work. Cities and states suffer because tax revenues are lower when many people are unemployed and the societal costs for public assistance, crime control, and health care are higher.

Why do students drop out of school? Some students believe that their classes are boring; others are skeptical about the value of schooling and think that completing high school will not increase their job opportunities. Upon leaving school, many dropouts have high hopes of making money and enjoying newfound freedom; however, some find few jobs are available that pay a living wage. Others learn that they do not have the required education for the “good” jobs that do exist.

Racial Segregation and Resegregation

Although some people believe that the issue of racial segregation has long been solved in America’s schools, in many areas of the United States schools remain racially segregated or have become resegregated (■ Figure 12.9). In 1954 the U.S. Supreme Court ruled (in *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas*) that “separate but equal” segregated schools are unconstitutional because they are inherently unequal. Today, racial segregation remains a fact of life in education: Efforts to bring about *desegregation*—the abolition of legally sanctioned racial-ethnic segregation—or *integration*—the implementation of specific action to change the racial-ethnic and/or class composition of the student body—has failed in many districts. Some school systems have bused students across town to achieve racial integration. Others have changed school attendance boundaries or introduced magnet schools with specialized programs such as science or the fine arts to change the

racial-ethnic composition of schools. But school segregation does not exist in isolation: Racially segregated housing patterns contribute to high rates of school segregation. In most states, local school boards and administrators determine what the attendance boundaries will be for schools in their district, often giving these educational leaders the ability to shape the composition of the student body in individual schools.

In the 2010s, researchers found that more than half of all schoolchildren in the United States attend classes in racially concentrated school districts comprised of student populations where over 75 percent of all students are either white or non-white. (Mervosh, 2019). Distinct differences were also found in the revenue allocated for white versus non-white school districts: Nonwhite districts received about \$2,200 less per student than districts that were predominantly white, for an overall difference that amounted to about \$23 billion (Mervosh, 2019).

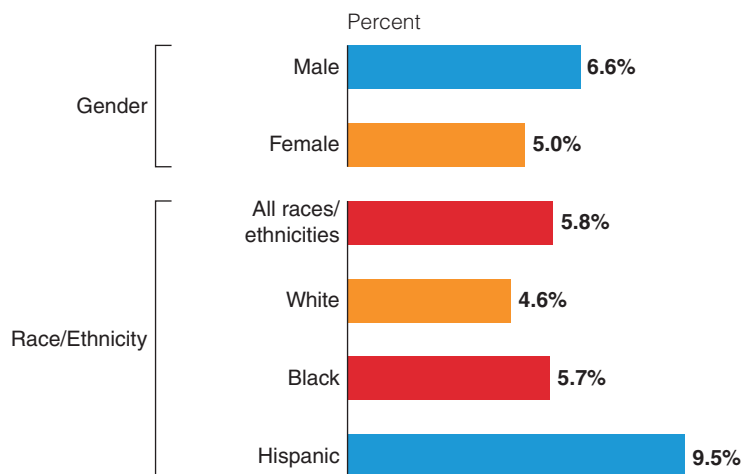


FIGURE 12.8 Status Dropout Rates for 16- to 24-Year-Olds by Gender and Race/Ethnicity, 2017–2018

Source: Author's compilation of data from National Center for Educational Statistics, 2019.



David Grossman/Alamy Stock Photo

FIGURE 12.9 Although many people believe that the United States is a racially integrated nation, a look at schools throughout the country reveals that many of them remain segregated or have become largely resegregated in recent decades.

For some school districts that were able to desegregate schools and classes, resegregation has become an issue. Some school districts have abandoned programs that had produced greater racial integration in local schools. Raleigh, North Carolina, is a case in point: A local school board decided to end consideration of race and socioeconomic status in determining school assignments and stopped the district's busing-for-diversity program. Those who opposed this return to the "neighborhood school" concept argued that resegregation would quickly occur throughout the district. The issue of resegregation is not unique to North Carolina or any other state: It is pervasive across the United States and remains a vestige of a time when a system of segregated white schools and black schools was sanctioned by law, particularly across the South. The problem of resegregation today involves double segregation by both race and poverty: The typical African American or Latinx student attends a school with almost twice as many low-income students as a school attended by the typical white American or Asian American student.

Competition for Public Schools

Public schools do not have a monopoly on K–12 education. Today, parents have more choices of where to send their children than in the past.

School Choice and School Vouchers School choice is a persistent issue in education. Much of the discussion about school choice focuses on school voucher programs in which public funds (tax dollars) are provided to parents so that they can pay their child's tuition at a private school of their choice. The U.S. Department of Education during the Trump

administration in the late 2010s pressed for the creation of a federally funded private school voucher program. As the time of this writing in 2019, sixty-two voucher programs operated in twenty-nine states and provided state support, either through direct payment to parents, education savings accounts to be used for educational expenses, or tax credits to individuals and corporations that provide scholarships for private school students (Fiddiman and Yin, 2019).

Many parents praise the voucher system because it provides them with options for schooling their children. Some political leaders applaud vouchers and other school-choice policies for

improving public school performance. However, voucher programs are controversial: Some critics believe that giving taxpayer money to parents so that they can spend it at private (often religious) schools violates constitutional requirements for the separation of church and state. However, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in *Zelman v. Simmons-Harris*, a case involving a Cleveland, Ohio, school district, that voucher policies are constitutional because parents have a choice and are not required to send their children to church-affiliated schools. Other critics claim that voucher programs are less effective in educating children than public schools. In sum, advocates like the choice factor in voucher programs while critics believe that vouchers undermine public education, lack accountability, and may contribute to the collapse of the public school system. Critics of private school voucher programs also point out that some states have used private school voucher programs for many years as a way to avoid having to racially integrate schools (Fiddiman and Yin, 2019).

Charter Schools Charter schools (or "schools of choice") are primary or secondary schools that receive public money but are free from some of the day-to-day bureaucracy of a larger school district that may limit classroom performance. These schools operate under a charter contract negotiated by the school's organizers (often parents or teachers) and a sponsor (usually a local school board, a state board of education, or a university) that oversees the provisions of the contract. Some school districts "contract out" by hiring for-profit companies to manage charter schools, but the schools themselves are considered to be "nonprofit." In the 2017–2018 school year, approximately 3.2 million students were enrolled in seven thousand public charter schools in forty-four states,

including the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and Guam. About 219,000 teachers were employed by charter schools, and \$440 million in federal funds was spent for charter schools (National Alliance for Public Charter Schools, 2019).

Advocates for charter schools suggest that these figures show that there is strong demand for charter schools. What are the unique claims for charter schools? They are supposed to provide more autonomy for individual students and teachers and to provide a large number of minority students with a higher-quality education than they would receive in the public schools in their area. Public charter schools enroll a greater percentage of low-income students than traditional public schools, as well as a larger proportion of African American and Hispanic/Latinx students (National Alliance for Public Charter Schools, 2019). Charter schools attempt to maintain an organizational culture that motivates students and encourages achievement rather than having a negative school environment. Some of these schools offer college-preparatory curriculums and help students of color achieve their goal of enrolling in the college or university of their choice.

However, charter schools have numerous challenges. Some schools have high turnover rates, perhaps partly because of family instability, students' socioeconomic status, or other factors not under the direct control of the schools. Many analysts believe that the positives seem to outweigh the negatives when it comes to charter schools addressing the academic gap among minority students.

Homeschooling Another alternative, homeschooling, has been chosen by some parents who hope to avoid the problems of public schools while providing a quality education for their children. It is estimated that about 2.5 million children are homeschooled in grades K through 12 (National Home Education Research Institute, 2019). This is a significant increase from the estimated 1.1 million students who were homeschooled in 2003, and the homeschool population continues to grow each year. The primary reasons that parents indicate for preferring to homeschool their children are (1) the ability to customize or individualize the curriculum based on each student's individual needs, (2) concern about school environments and a desire to have a positive learning environment for each child, (3) the desire to provide a safer learning environment free from physical violence, drug and alcohol abuse, racism, and other negative influences on children that may be found in public schools, (4) dissatisfaction with the academic instruction available at traditional schools, and (5) the ability to enhance family relationships among siblings as well as among and parents and children (National Home Education Research Institute, 2019). Typically, the parents of homeschoolers are better educated, on average, than other parents; however, their income is about the same. Researchers have found that boys and girls are equally likely to be homeschooled.

Various associations of homeschoolers now provide communication links for parents and children, and technological advances in computers and the Internet have made

it possible for homeschoolers to gain information and communicate with one another. In some states, parents organize athletic leagues, proms, and other social events so that their children will have an active social life without being part of a highly structured school setting. According to advocates, homeschooled students typically have high academic achievements and high rates of employment.

Critics of homeschooling question how much parents know about school curricula and how competent they are to educate their own children at home, particularly in rapidly changing subjects such as science and computer technology. Some states have passed accountability laws that must be met by parents who teach their children at home (NCES, 2019b).

School Safety and Violence at All Levels

Today, officials in schools from the elementary years to two-year colleges and four-year universities are focusing on how to reduce or eliminate violence. In many schools, teachers and counselors are instructed in anger management and peer mediation, and they are encouraged to develop classroom instruction that teaches values such as respect and responsibility (NCES, 2019b). Some schools create partnerships with local law enforcement agencies and social service organizations to link issues of school safety to larger concerns about safety in the community and the nation. With the increase in the number of gun deaths and mass shootings in U.S. schools, much more emphasis is now being placed on active-shooter response drills to help faculty and students know how to protect themselves in case of such an emergency. Between 2000 and 2017, thirty-seven active-shooter incidents were reported at kindergarten through grade 12 schools in the United States. This means that 15 percent of all active-shooter events during that time period occurred in the schools of this nation (EduRisk, 2019). Two primary ways have been devised to respond to these acts of violence: (1) lockdowns, which require persons on campus to remain hidden or locked into a fixed location until an "All Clear" notification is given indicating the emergency has been resolved, and (2) a multi-option approach, which allows faculty and students to choose from a variety of response tactics, including attempting to escape, hiding, or engaging the shooter. Thus far, it appears that most schools caught in the traumatic situation of an active shooter on campus have taught their administrators, faculty, and staff the importance of the lockdown, unless they are advised otherwise. According to authorities on active-shooter situations in schools, as these unfortunate events continue to occur, schools and local law enforcement officials will continue to come up with new responses to help create a safe school environment and to protect the school population when they are in harm's way (EduRisk, 2019).

Although there are not as many active-shooter incidents in schools as it might appear because of constant 24/7 media attention of each event that does occur, lesser forms of violent incidents are reported each year by nearly 75 percent of all public schools, grades K through 12, and 40 percent of these incidents are reported to the local police. Estimates of the most common incidents reported include physical attack or fight without a weapon (about 70 percent), threat of physical attack without a weapon (about 46 percent), vandalism (about 45 percent), theft/larceny (about 44 percent), possession of a knife or other sharp object (about 40 percent), and distribution, possession, or use of illegal drugs (about 25 percent) (NCES, 2019b). Yet, despite these numbers, statistics related to school safety continue to show that U.S. schools are among the safest places for young people. According to “Indicators of School Crime and Safety,” jointly released by the National Center for Education Statistics and the U.S. Department of Justice’s Bureau of Justice Statistics, young people are more likely to be victims of violent crime at or near their home, on the streets, at commercial establishments, or at parks than they are at school (NCES, 2019b). However, these statistics do not keep many people from believing that schools are becoming more dangerous with each passing year and that all schools should have high-tech surveillance equipment and police officers present to help maintain a safe environment.

Even with safety measures in place, violence and fear of violence continue to be pressing problems in schools throughout the United States. This concern extends from

kindergarten through grade 12 because violent acts have resulted in deaths in a number of communities throughout the United States (■ Figure 12.10). The Newtown, Connecticut, school massacre occurred on December 14, 2012, when Adam Lanza fatally shot twenty children and six adult staff members at an elementary school before committing suicide. Considered the second deadliest mass murder at an elementary school in U.S. history (following the 1927 Bath School bombings in Michigan), this violent attack prompted extensive debate about gun control and whether school officials should be armed to prevent future occurrences of this kind or whether police officers should be stationed in every school.

So far, the evidence is unclear on the effect of placing police officers in every school. Do they deter crime or provide safety if an armed person seeks to harm students and school personnel? Advocates say that the answer is an unequivocal “yes.” However, critics note that the recent increase in police officers and armed guards in schools has also brought about an increase in the number of students who are arrested for minor behavior problems, thus pushing children whose detrimental behavior might best be handled by the school’s discipline system into the criminal courts for relatively minor offenses.

Like public elementary and secondary schools, college and university campuses are not immune to violence, as deranged individuals have engaged in acts of personal terrorism at the expense of students, professors, and other victims. In the aftermath of tragedies such as the one that

occurred at Virginia Tech in 2007, in which thirty-two people were killed by a student, there was a massive outpouring of public sympathy and calls for greater campus security. As usual, gun-control advocates called for greater control over the licensing and ownership of firearms and for heightened police security on college campuses, whereas pro-gun advocates argued that people should be allowed to carry firearms on campus for their own protection. Lawmakers in a number of states introduced measures seeking to relax concealed-weapons restrictions on college and university campuses. As of this writing, many state legislatures have continued to debate issues pertaining to gun control, particularly on college campuses. Many people have serious concerns



MediaPunch Inc./Alamy Stock Photo

FIGURE 12.10 In the aftermath of the 2018 mass school shooting at Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida, many people sought more-stringent gun laws to prevent future occurrences of similar horrendous events. Do you believe there is sufficient public concern and political leadership, based on this and other mass shootings, to bring about stronger gun-control legislation in the United States? Why or why not?

about arming schoolteachers and university professors and allowing concealed weapons on school grounds and college campuses because having them readily available might make a bad situation even worse.

Opportunities and Challenges in Colleges and Universities

Who attends college? What sort of college or university do they attend? We explore these and other questions in this section.

Community Colleges

One of the fastest-growing areas of U.S. higher education today is the community college; however, the history of two-year colleges goes back more than a century, with the establishment of Joliet Junior College in Illinois (■ Figure 12.11). Following World War II, the GI Bill of Rights provided the opportunity for more people to attend college, and in 1948 a presidential commission report called for the establishment of a network of public community colleges that would charge little or no tuition, serve as cultural centers, be comprehensive in their program offerings, and serve the area in which they were located.

Hundreds of community colleges were opened across the nation during the 1960s, and the number of such institutions has steadily increased since that time as community colleges have responded to the needs of their students and local communities. Community colleges offer a variety of courses, some of which are referred to as “transfer courses,” in which students earn credits that are fully transferable to a four-year college or university. Other courses are in technical/occupational programs, which provide formal instruction in fields such as nursing, emergency medical technology, plumbing, carpentry, and computer information technology. Many community colleges are now also offering four-year degrees, sometimes in conjunction with four-year colleges located in the same state.

Community colleges educate nearly half (41 percent) of the nation’s undergraduates. According to the American Association of Community Colleges (2019), the 1,051 community colleges (including public, independent, and tribal colleges) in the United States enroll about 12 million students in credit and noncredit courses.

Women make up a slight majority (56 percent) of community college students, and for working women and mothers of young children, these schools provide a unique opportunity to attend classes on a part-time basis as their schedule permits. Men also benefit from flexible scheduling because they can work part time or full time while enrolled in school. About 21 percent of all full-time community college students are employed full time, and another 41 percent are employed part time. By contrast, 72 percent of all part-time students at community colleges work either full time or part time.



Joliet Junior College



Phil Roche/Miami Dade College

FIGURE 12.11 Joliet Junior College (Illinois) is the oldest two-year college in the United States, having opened its doors in 1901. The bottom photo shows a scene from graduation day at the nation’s largest two-year school, Miami Dade College (Florida), which recently began offering four-year degrees, part of a national trend among two-year colleges. Today, Joliet, Miami Dade, and other schools like these fulfill many needs in the competitive world of higher education.

Community colleges offer educational opportunities for some students who otherwise might not have an option of gaining two or more years of additional education or certification beyond their high school diploma. First-generation college students account for 29 percent of community college enrollment. These colleges are also important for underrepresented minority student enrollment. White (non-Hispanic) students account for 46 percent of students enrolled in credit courses, as compared with 25 percent Hispanic students, 13 percent African American (black) students, 6 percent Asian/Pacific Islander students, and 1 percent Native American students. Students who identify themselves as “two or more races,” “other/unknown,” or “nonresident alien” account for another 9 percent of the overall community college population in the United States (American Association of Community Colleges, 2019).

One of the greatest challenges facing community colleges today is money. Across the nation, state and local governments struggling to balance their budgets have slashed funding for community colleges. In a number of regions, these cuts have been so severe that schools have been seriously limited in their ability to meet the needs of their students. In some cases, colleges have terminated programs, slashed course offerings, reduced the number of faculty, and eliminated essential student services. However, as the cost of a four-year college education continues to rise, more people are choosing to attend community colleges, and this is motivating some civic and political leaders to find additional sources of funding to help provide better educational opportunities for a wider segment of the U.S. population. Currently, most federal aid received by community colleges comes from Pell Grants, the federal work-study program, Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grants, and subsidized and unsubsidized federal loans (American Association of Community Colleges, 2019).

Four-Year Colleges and Universities

More than 20 million undergraduate and graduate students attend public or private degree-granting colleges or universities in the United States (*Inside Higher Ed*, 2019). Four-year schools typically offer a general education curriculum that gives students exposure to multiple disciplines and ways of knowing, along with more in-depth study (known as a “major”) in at least one area of concentration. However, many challenges are faced by four-year institutions, ranging from the cost of higher education to racial and ethnic differences in enrollment and lack of faculty diversity. One key issue of concern to many higher-education administrators is the need to maintain or enhance enrollment by serving students beyond the traditional age (18–22 years old) of undergraduate students. Another important issue is how to modify or change curriculum to meet the interests and needs of a new generation of learners who have career opportunities in fields

that did not exist when the current curricula of many colleges and universities were developed. A third problematic area in higher education is what will be the future of international enrollment. This issue is related to national immigration policies, the global economy and competition from other nations for top students, and a concern about whether to recruit students from abroad or to seek to reach a broader diversity of students who are permanent residents of the United States (*Inside Higher Ed*, 2019). Central to all of these issues is the problem of the cost of college education in the 2020s.

The High Cost of a College Education

What does a college education cost? According to the College Board (2019), in the 2019–2020 academic year, the average cost for full-time students at public four-year colleges and universities who live on campus and pay in-state tuition was \$21,950 as compared with \$49,870 for similar students at private nonprofit schools. In the same academic year, the published rate for out-of-state students at four-year public institutions was \$38,330. The lowest total costs for tuition and fees (\$3,730) were paid by students at public two-year institutions who lived in the school’s “in-district” area and commuted to campus rather than living there (College Board, 2019). Although public institutions such as community colleges and state colleges and universities typically have lower tuition and overall costs—because they are partly funded by tax dollars—than private colleges have, the cost of attending public institutions has continued to increase over the past four decades.

The *actual* cost of a college education is confusing. One reason for disparities in numbers is the fact that there is often a difference between the published amount for tuition and fees (known as the sticker price) paid by persons enrolled as full-time undergraduates as contrasted with what students actually pay after taking grant aid and tax benefits into consideration. For example, in the 2015–2016 academic year (the latest data available at the time of this writing) about 75 percent of full-time undergraduate students received grants that reduced the actual price they paid for college. Grant aid is typically higher at higher-priced institutions. Some states and institutions also have grant tuition waivers for veterans, teachers, and dependents of employees (College Board, 2019).

According to some social analysts, a college education is a bargain and a means of upward mobility. However, other analysts believe that the cost of a college education is still far too high and that this cost reproduces existing inequalities in society. Students who lack money may be denied access to higher education, and those who are able to attend college receive different types of education based on their ability to pay. For example, a community college student who receives an associate’s degree or completes a certificate program may be prepared for a position in the middle of the occupational status range, such as a dental assistant, computer programmer, or auto mechanic. In



Brian Snyder/Reuters

FIGURE 12.12 Soaring costs of both public and private institutions of higher education are a pressing problem for today's college students and their parents. What factors have contributed to the higher overall costs of obtaining a college degree?

contrast, university graduates with four-year degrees are more likely to find initial employment with firms where they stand a chance of being promoted to high-level management and executive positions. They may also have more of the prerequisites needed for graduate and professional education, such as law, business, or medicine.

How much financial assistance is available? The answer to this question varies widely based on the institution attended, the student's academic qualifications, and need-based criteria of each student based on their family income and other financial measures. One of the most widely known grants to undergraduate students is the federal Pell Grant. Unlike a student loan, a Pell Grant usually does not have to be repaid. In the 2019–2020 academic year, the maximum Pell Grant award was \$6,195, and in some cases, an eligible student might receive up to 150 percent of his or her scheduled Pell Grant award for an award year (Studentaid.gov, 2019). Despite extensive discussion about major cuts in funding for higher education by the Trump administration in 2019, Congressional leaders were able to pass a budget that did not include the deep cuts in education spending that had been proposed. In fact, the final budget

bill included a \$2.5 billion increase in spending on higher-education programs that may benefit some students who are in need of additional grant money to attend or complete their college educations. For example, the Pell Grant maximum might be increased by \$150, for a total maximum award of \$6,345 (Fain, 2019). Many questions remain about student loans and the possible long-term effects of high student debt on individuals after they complete their college education ■ Figure 12.12).

Racial and Ethnic Differences in Enrollment

How does college enrollment differ by race and ethnicity? People of color (who are more likely than the average white student to be from lower-income families) are underrepresented in higher education. White Americans make up about 55.9 percent of all college students at both two-year and four-year public and private institutions, as compared to African American enrollment at 13.5 percent, Hispanic/Latinx enrollment at 19 percent, Asian American enrollment at 6.8 percent, American Indian (Native American)/Alaska Native enrollment at 0.7 percent, and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander at 0.3 percent (*Chronicle of Higher Education*, 2019).

Although Native American/Alaska Native enrollment rates have remained stagnant for a number of years, tribal colleges, often located on or near reservations, have experienced growth in student enrollment. Founded to overcome racism experienced by Native American students in traditional four-year colleges and to shrink the

high dropout rate among Native American college students, thirty-seven colleges and universities are now federally chartered and run by the Native American nations. Unlike other community colleges, the tribal colleges receive no funding from state and local governments and, as a result, are often short of funds to fulfill their academic mission.

The proportionately low number of people of color enrolled in colleges and universities is reflected in the educational achievement of people ages twenty-five and over, as shown in ■ Figure 12.13. If we focus on persons who receive doctorate degrees, the underrepresentation of persons of color is even more striking. According to the *Chronicle of Higher Education* (2019), of the 54,664 doctoral degrees conferred in 2017 (the latest year available) on recipients who were U.S. citizens or permanent residents, African Americans earned 6.7 percent, Hispanics earned 7.1 percent, and Native Americans/American Indians or Alaska Natives earned 0.3 percent. By contrast, whites (non-Hispanic) earned 69.5 percent of these degrees and Asian Americans earned 9.8 percent. Persons with two or more races and those indicating “other or

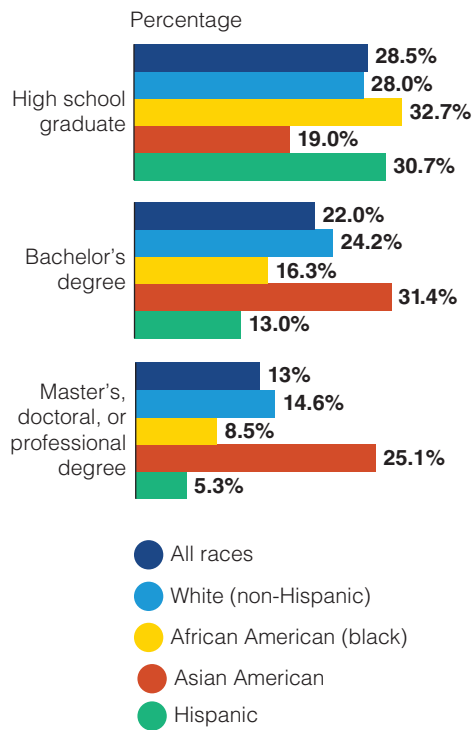


FIGURE 12.13 Highest Level of Educational Attainment of the U.S. Population Ages 25 and Over by Race and Hispanic Origin, 2018

Source: Author's compilation of U.S. Census Bureau Educational Attainment Table 1, 2018.

unknown” races accounted for an additional 6.5 percent of the total doctoral degrees awarded.

Underrepresentation is not the only problem faced by students of color: Problems of prejudice and discrimination continue on some college campuses. Some problems are overt and highly visible; others are more covert and hidden from public view. Examples of overt racism include mocking Black History Month or a Latinx celebration on campuses, referring to individuals by derogatory names, tying nooses on doorknobs of dorm rooms or faculty offices, and having “parties” where guests dress in outfits that ridicule people from different cultures or nations. A study by researchers Edna B. Chun and Joe R. Feagin (2019) found American colleges and universities are struggling with strained race relations on campus. Some of the problems in predominantly white institutions are rooted in the intentional and unintentional isolation of minority students, racial exclusion of students from the everyday life and activities of the university, differential support for minority students and lack of interest in their issues on the part of college officials, and overt acts of racism and violence perpetrated against students of color on campuses across the country. Chun and Feagin found that administrators at some institutions are hesitant to deal with racial incidents and long-term race-based problems on campus. According to these researchers, powerful decision makers at these historically white institutions are often reluctant to probe into the problem of how racially

and gender-based exclusionary processes occur on a daily basis and how these behaviors are perpetuated over time on campuses. Chun and Feagin conclude that a new framework is needed for reducing racism in higher education: What is needed is a thorough examination of “imbedded sociocultural norms, learned racist and sexist framing, and half-conscious or fully conscious discriminatory actions” (Jaschik, 2019). Some of the same issues of prejudice and discrimination that are embedded in educational institutions are also prevalent in religious organizations. We now turn to a view of religion in historical and contemporary perspective.

Religion in Historical Perspective

Religion is a social institution composed of a unified system of beliefs, symbols, and rituals—based on some sacred or supernatural realm—that guides human behavior, gives meaning to life, and unites believers into a community. For many people, religious beliefs provide the answers for seemingly unanswerable questions about the meaning of life and death.

Religion and the Meaning of Life

Religion seeks to answer important questions such as why we exist, why people suffer and die, and what happens when we die. Whereas science and medicine typically rely on existing scientific evidence to respond to these questions, religion seeks to explain suffering, death, and injustice in the realm of the sacred. According to classical sociologist Emile Durkheim (1995/1912), **sacred** refers to those aspects of life that are extraordinary or supernatural—in other words, those things that are set apart as “holy.” People feel a sense of awe, reverence, deep respect, or fear for that which is considered sacred. Across cultures and in different eras, many things have been considered sacred, including invisible gods, spirits, specific animals or trees, altars, crosses, holy books, and special words or songs that only the initiated could speak or sing. Those things that people do not set apart as sacred are referred to as **profane**—the everyday, secular, or “worldly” aspects of life. Thus, whereas sacred beliefs are rooted in the holy or supernatural, secular beliefs have their foundation in scientific knowledge or everyday explanations. In the debate between creationists and evolutionists, for example, advocates of creationism view it as a belief founded in sacred (Biblical) teachings, whereas advocates of evolutionism assert that their beliefs are based on provable scientific facts.

In addition to beliefs, religion also comprises symbols and rituals (■ Figure 12.14). According to anthropologist Clifford Geertz (1966), religion is a set of cultural symbols that establishes powerful and pervasive moods and motivations to help people interpret the meaning of life and establish a direction for their behavior. People often act out their religious beliefs in the form of *rituals*—regularly repeated



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Ammar Awad/REUTERS

FIGURE 12.14 One of the rituals in most religions is the identification of a holy place. For Jews (clockwise from top left), one such place is the Western Wall in Jerusalem. For Muslims, an example of a holy place is the Blue Mosque in Turkey. Historically, Native Americans believed in the ritual of creating burial mounds. For Christians, Bethlehem is a historic and spiritual pilgrimage. And for Buddhists, the Mahaparinirvana Stupa, a shrine in India with a reclining, sleeping golden Buddha, is a holy place.

and carefully prescribed forms of behavior that symbolize a cherished value or belief. Rituals range from songs and prayers to offerings and sacrifices that worship or praise a Supreme Being, an ideal, or a set of supernatural principles. For example, Muslims bow toward Mecca, the holy city of Islam, five times a day at fixed times to pray to God, whereas Christians participate in the celebration of communion (or the “Lord’s Supper”) to commemorate the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. Rituals differ from everyday actions in that they involve very strictly determined behavior.

religion

a social institution composed of a unified system of beliefs, symbols, and rituals—based on some sacred or supernatural realm—that guides human behavior, gives meaning to life, and unites believers into a community.

sacred

those aspects of life that are extraordinary or supernatural.

profane

the everyday, secular, or “worldly,” aspects of life.

The rituals involved in praying or in observing communion are carefully orchestrated and must be followed with precision. According to sociologist Randall Collins (1982: 34), “In rituals, it is the forms that count. Saying prayers, singing a hymn, performing a primitive sacrifice or a dance, marching in a procession, kneeling before an idol or making the sign of the cross—in these, the action must be done the right way.”

Categories of Religion Although it is difficult to establish exactly when religious rituals first began, anthropologists have concluded that all known societies over the past 100,000 years have had some form of religion. The original locations of the world’s major religions are shown in ■ Figure 12.15.

Religions have been classified into four main categories based on their dominant belief: simple supernaturalism, animism, theism, and transcendent idealism. In very simple preindustrial societies, religion often takes the form of *simple supernaturalism*—the belief that supernatural forces affect people’s lives either positively or negatively. This type of religion does not acknowledge specific gods or supernatural spirits but focuses instead on impersonal forces that may exist in people or natural objects. By contrast, *animism* is the belief that plants, animals, or other elements of the natural world are endowed with spirits or life forces having an effect on events in society. Animism is identified with early hunting-and-gathering societies and

with many Native American societies, in which everyday life was not separated from the elements of the natural world.

The third category of religion is *theism*—a belief in a god or gods. Horticultural societies were among the first to practice *monotheism*—a belief in a single, supreme being or god who is responsible for significant events such as the creation of the world. Three of the major world religions—Christianity, Judaism, and Islam—are monotheistic. By contrast, Shinto and a number of indigenous religions of Africa are forms of *polytheism*—a belief in more than one god (see ■ Table 12.1). The fourth category of religion, transcendent idealism, is *nontheistic* because it does not focus on worship of a god or gods. *Transcendent idealism* is a belief in sacred principles of thought and conduct. Principles such as truth, justice, affirmation of life, and tolerance for others are central tenets of transcendent idealists, who seek an elevated state of consciousness in which they can fulfill their true potential.

Religion and Scientific Explanations

During the Industrial Revolution, scientific explanations began to compete with religious views of life. Rapid growth in scientific and technological knowledge gave rise to the idea that science would ultimately answer questions that had previously been in the realm of religion. Science is the accumulated knowledge of the physical world that is systematically obtained through observation, experimentation,

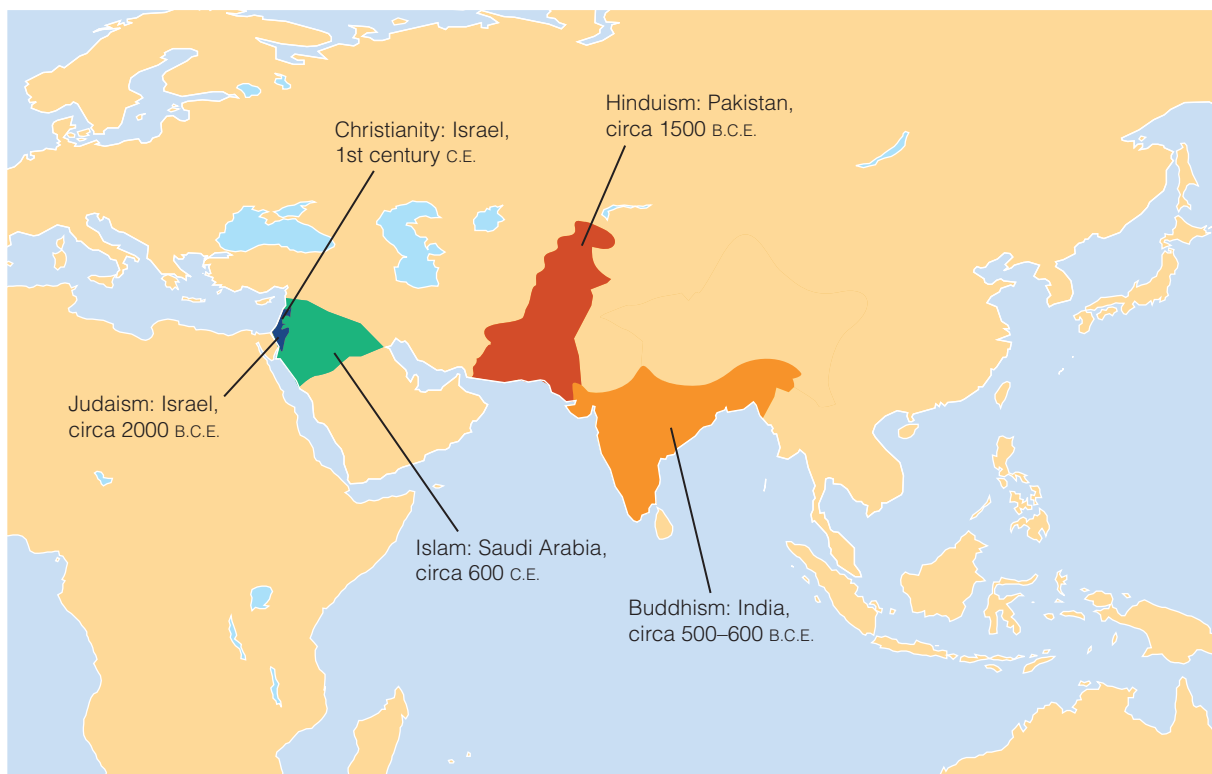







FIGURE 12.15 Original Locations of the World’s Major Religions

Source: Map created by author based on Infoplease, 2018.

TABLE 12.1 Major World Religions

		Current Followers	Founder/Date	Beliefs
	Christianity	2.4 billion	Jesus—1st century CE	Jesus is the Son of God. Through good moral and religious behavior (and/or God's grace), people achieve eternal life with God.
	Islam	1.9 billion	Muhammad—ca. 600 CE	Muhammad received the Qur'an (scriptures) from God. On Judgment Day, believers who have submitted to God's will, as revealed in the Qur'an, will go to an eternal Garden of Eden.
	Hinduism	1.15 billion	No specific founder—ca. 1500 BCE	Brahma (creator), Vishnu (preserver), and Shiva (destroyer) are divine. Union with ultimate reality and escape from eternal reincarnation are achieved through yoga, adherence to scripture, and devotion.
	Buddhism	521 million	Siddhartha Gautama—500–600 BCE	Through meditation and adherence to the Eight-Fold Path (correct thought and behavior), people can free themselves from desire and suffering, escape the cycle of eternal rebirth, and achieve nirvana (enlightenment).
	Judaism	14.5 million	Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—ca. 2000 BCE	God's nature and will are revealed in the Torah (Hebrew scripture) and in His intervention in history. God has established a covenant with the people of Israel, who are called to a life of holiness, justice, mercy, and fidelity to God's law.

and other scientific methods. Many scholars believed that increases in scientific knowledge would result in **secularization**—the process by which religious beliefs, practices, and institutions lose their significance in sectors of society and culture (Berger, 1967). Secularization involves a decline of religion in everyday life and a corresponding increase in organizations that are highly bureaucratized, fragmented, and impersonal.

Sociological Perspectives on Religion

Religion as a social institution is a powerful, deeply felt, and influential force in human society. Sociologists study the social institution of religion because of the importance that religion holds for many people; they also want to know more about the influence of religion on society, and vice versa. For example, some people believe that the introduction of prayer or religious instruction in public schools would have a positive effect on the teaching of values such as honesty, compassion, courage, and tolerance because these values could be given a moral foundation. However, society has strongly influenced the practice of religion in the United States as a result of court rulings and laws that have limited religious activities in public settings, including prayer in public schools and at their athletic events (see this chapter's "Sociology and Social Policy" box).

The major sociological perspectives have different outlooks on the relationship between religion and society. Functionalists typically emphasize the ways in which religious beliefs and rituals can bind people together. Conflicted explanations suggest that religion can be a source of false consciousness in society. Symbolic

interactionists focus on the meanings that people give to religion in their everyday lives.

Functionalist Perspectives on Religion

The functionalist perspective on religion finds its roots in the works of Emile Durkheim, who emphasized that religion is essential to the maintenance of society. He suggested that religion is a cultural universal found in all societies because it meets basic human needs and serves important societal functions.

For Durkheim, the central feature of all religions is the presence of sacred beliefs and rituals that bind people together in a collectivity. In his studies of the religion of the Australian aborigines, for example, Durkheim (1995/1912) found that each clan had established its own sacred totem, which included kangaroos, trees, rivers, rock formations, and other animals or natural creations. To clan members, their totem was sacred; it symbolized some unique quality of their clan. People developed a feeling of unity by performing ritual dances around their totem, which caused them to abandon individual self-interest. Durkheim suggested that the correct performance of the ritual gives rise to religious conviction. Religious beliefs and rituals are *collective representations*—group-held meanings that express something important

animism

the belief that plants, animals, or other elements of the natural world are endowed with spirits or life forces having an effect on events in society.

secularization

the process by which religious beliefs, practices, and institutions lose their significance in sectors of society and culture.

Fighting it Out on the Football Field: Prayer in Public Schools and the Issue of Separation of Church and State

Location: Rockvale High School (near Murfreesboro, Tennessee)

QUESTION: What happens when a public high school coach named Rick Rice leads a prayer with his players on the field following a football game?

ANSWER: The Freedom From Religion Foundation (FFRF) files a complaint with the school district's board, referring to the prayer as "a constitutional violation." A spokesperson for the foundation notes that a concerned parent had complained about the prayer, and the group is taking action to keep this type of behavior from occurring again. According to a statement by the FFRF attorney, "Coach Rice's conduct is unconstitutional because he endorses and promotes his religion when acting in his official capacity as a school district employee When a public school employee acting in an official capacity organizes and advocates for team prayer, he effectively endorses religion on the District's behalf" (qtd. in Hineman and Joyce, 2019).

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT: The school district contacts Coach Rice who states that he had led two prayers with his players at football games during the season, and a student had led a third prayer at another game. In the words of the coach: "I wasn't trying to be disrespectful to other religions. It was just something I got used to [at my previous school], and nothing was ever said" (qtd. in Hineman and Joyce, 2019).

OUTCOME: Based on U.S. Supreme Court decisions that have struck down school-sponsored prayer in public schools, plus a federal court ruling that even

a coach's silent participation in a student-led prayer was unconstitutional in a public school setting, Coach Rice apologizes and agrees that he will no longer lead prayers or engage in other religious activities at public school-related events.

FOOTBALL, PRAYER, AND THE U.S. CONSTITUTION: Why is the issue of prayer in public schools and their athletic events an ongoing concern for many people? As we think about this question, it is necessary to understand how social policy has been historically



Michael Zagaris/San Francisco 49ers/Getty Images

Should prayer be permitted in public schools? At public school athletic events? Given the diversity of beliefs that U.S. people hold, arguments and court cases over activities such as prayer on the football field will no doubt continue long in the future.

about the group itself. Because of the intertwining of group consciousness and society, functionalists suggest that religion has three important functions in any society:

1. *Meaning and purpose.* Religion offers meaning for the human experience. Some events create a profound sense of loss on both an individual basis (such as injustice, suffering, and the death of a loved one) and a group basis (such as famine, earthquake, economic depression, or subjugation by an enemy). Inequality may cause people to wonder why their own situation is no better than it is. Most religions offer explanations for these concerns. Explanations may differ from one religion to another, yet each tells the

individual or group that life is part of a larger system of order in the universe. Some (but not all) religions even offer hope of an afterlife for persons who follow the religion's tenets of morality in this life. Such beliefs help make injustices in this life easier to endure.

2. *Social cohesion and a sense of belonging.* Religious teachings and practices, by emphasizing shared symbolism, help promote social cohesion. An example is the Christian ritual of communion, which not only commemorates a historical event but also allows followers to participate in the unity ("communion") of themselves with other believers. All religions have some form of shared experiences that rekindle the group's consciousness of its own unity.

used to establish a division between church and state. When the U.S. Constitution was ratified in 1789, the colonists who made up the majority of the population of the original states were of many different faiths. Because of this diversity, there was no mention of religion in the original Constitution. However, in 1791 the First Amendment added the following provision: "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof." The ban was binding only on the federal government; however, in 1947 the U.S. Supreme Court held that the Fourteenth Amendment ("No State shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens") had the effect of making the First Amendment's separation of church and state applicable to state governments as well.

Historically, the Supreme Court has been called on to define the boundary between permissible and impermissible governmental action with regard to religion. In 1947 the court held that the ban on establishing a religion made it unconstitutional for a state to use tax revenues to support an institution that taught religion. In 1962 and 1963 the court expanded this ruling to include many types of religious activities at schools or in connection with school activities, such as group prayer, invocations and other religious observances at sporting events, and distribution of religious materials at school. However, in 1990 the court ruled that religious groups could meet on school property if certain conditions were met, including that attendance must be voluntary, the meetings must be organized and run by students, and the activities must occur outside of regular class hours.

Compromises regarding prayer in schools have been attempted in some states as legislators passed laws that either permit or mandate a daily moment of silence in

public schools; however, the effect of such compromises has often been that neither side in the debate is appeased. Advocates of allowing more religious activities in public education believe that the constitutional dictate prohibiting "establishment of religion" was not intended to keep religion out of the public schools and that students need greater access to religious and moral training. Opponents believe that any entry of religious training and religious observances into public education and taxpayer-supported school facilities or events violates the Constitution and might be used by some people to promote their religion over others, or over a person's right to have no religion at all. No doubt, this debate will continue long into the future as some people advocate for school prayer and other religious functions in public schools that will pass constitutional muster while, at the same time, staunch opponents will continue to argue that any form of religious expression should not be allowed in this nation's public schools or at their athletic events.

Reflect & Analyze

Two different constitutional concepts are involved in this situation. First, under the Establishment Clause of the U.S. Constitution, governments and their agencies, including public schools, cannot endorse religious practices through their actions. Second, however, the Free Exercise Clause of the First Amendment does protect individual expressions of religious beliefs at public schools under specific circumstances. This raises an important question: Where should the line be drawn on religious observances and public education? What do you think?

(Source: Based on Diamant, 2019; Hineman and Joyce, 2019; Pew Research Center Religion & Public Life, 2019a, 2019c. Interpretation in this section is by the author and does not necessarily reflect the beliefs of Diamant, the Pew Research Center, or the *USA Today* journalists and their publication.)

3. *Social control and support for the government.* All societies attempt to maintain social control through systems of rewards and punishments. Sacred symbols and beliefs establish powerful, pervasive, long-lasting motivations based on the concept of a general order of existence. In other words, if individuals consider themselves to be part of a larger order that holds the ultimate meaning in life, they will feel bound to one another (and past and future generations) in a way that otherwise might not be possible.

Religion also helps maintain social control in society by conferring supernatural legitimacy on the norms and laws of society. In some societies, social control occurs as a result

of direct collusion between the dominant classes and the dominant religious organizations.

In the United States the separation of church and state reduces religious legitimization of political power. Nevertheless, political leaders often use religion to justify their decisions, stating that they have prayed for guidance in deciding what to do. This informal relationship between religion and the state has been referred to as *civil religion*—the

civil religion

the set of beliefs, rituals, and symbols that makes sacred the values of the society and places the nation in the context of the ultimate system of meaning.

set of beliefs, rituals, and symbols that makes sacred the values of the society and places the nation in the context of the ultimate system of meaning. Civil religion is not tied to any one denomination or religious group; it has an identity all its own. For example, many civil ceremonies in the United States have a marked religious quality. National values are celebrated on “high holy days” such as Memorial Day and the Fourth of July. Both political inaugurations and courtroom trials require people to place their hand on a Bible while swearing to do their duty or tell the truth, as the case may be. The U.S. flag is the primary sacred object of our civil religion, and the pledge of allegiance has included the phrase “one nation under God” for many years now. U.S. currency bears the inscription “In God We Trust.”

Conflict Perspectives on Religion

Many functionalists view religion, including civil religion, as serving positive functions in society, but some conflict theorists view religion negatively.

Karl Marx on Religion For Marx, *ideologies*—systematic views of the way the world ought to be—are embodied in religious doctrines and political values. These ideologies also serve to justify the status quo and retard social change. The capitalist class uses religious ideology as a tool of domination to mislead workers about their true interests. For this reason, Marx wrote his famous statement that religion is the “opiate of the masses.” People become complacent because they have been taught to believe in an afterlife in which they will be rewarded for their suffering and misery in this life. Although these religious teachings soothe the masses’ distress, any relief is illusory. Religion unites people under a “false consciousness” that they share common interests with members of the dominant class.

Max Weber on Religion Whereas Marx believed that religion retarded social change, Weber argued just the opposite. For Weber, religion could be a catalyst to produce social change. In *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1976/1904–1905), Weber asserted that the religious teachings of John Calvin were directly related to the rise of capitalism. Calvin emphasized the doctrine of *predestination*—the belief that even before they are born, all people are divided into two groups, the saved and the damned, and only God knows who will go to heaven (the elect) and who will go to hell. Because people cannot know whether they will be saved, they tend to look for earthly signs that they are among the elect. According to the Protestant ethic, those who have faith, perform good works, and achieve economic success are more likely to be among the chosen of God. As a result, people work hard, save their money, and do not spend it on worldly frivolity; instead, they reinvest it in their land, equipment, and labor.

The spirit of capitalism grew in the fertile soil of the Protestant ethic. Even as people worked ever harder to prove their religious piety, structural conditions in Europe

led to the Industrial Revolution, free markets, and the commercialization of the economy—developments that worked hand in hand with Calvinist religious teachings. From this viewpoint, wealth was an unintended consequence of religious piety and hard work. With the contemporary secularizing influence of wealth, people often think of wealth and material possessions as the major (or only) reason to work. Although it is no longer referred to as the “Protestant ethic,” many people still refer to the “work ethic” in somewhat the same manner that Weber did. For example, political and business leaders in the United States often claim that “the work ethic is dead.”

Like Marx, Weber was acutely aware that religion could reinforce existing social arrangements, especially the stratification system (■ Figure 12.16). The wealthy can use religion to justify their power and privilege: It is a sign of God’s approval of their hard work and morality. As for the poor, if they work hard and live a moral life, they will be richly rewarded in another life.

From a conflict perspective, religion tends to promote conflict between groups and societies. According to conflict theorists, conflict may be *between* religious groups (e.g., anti-Semitism), *within* a religious group (e.g., when a splinter group leaves an existing denomination), or between a religious group and the *larger society* (e.g., the conflict over religion in the classroom). Conflict theorists assert that in attempting to provide meaning and purpose in life while at the same time promoting the status quo, religion is used by the dominant classes to impose their own control over society and its resources. Many feminists object to the patriarchal nature of most religions; some advocate a break from traditional religions, whereas others seek to reform religious language, symbols, and rituals to eliminate the elements of patriarchy.

Symbolic Interactionist Perspectives on Religion

Thus far, we have been looking at religion primarily from a macrolevel perspective. Symbolic interactionists focus their attention on a microlevel analysis that examines the meanings that people give to religion in their everyday lives.

Religion as a Reference Group For many people, religion serves as a reference group to help them define themselves. For example, religious symbols have meaning for large bodies of people. The Star of David holds special significance for Jews, just as the crescent moon and star do for Muslims and the cross does for Christians. For individuals as well, a symbol may have a certain meaning beyond that shared by the group. For instance, a symbol given to a child may have special meaning when he or she grows up and faces war or other crises. It may not only remind the adult of a religious belief but also create a feeling of closeness with a relative who is now deceased. The symbolism of religion may be so powerful because it helps us to express the basic facts of our existence.



Devendra M Singh/AP/Getty Images

FIGURE 12.16 According to Marx and Weber, religion serves to reinforce social stratification in a society. For example, according to Hindu belief, a person's social position in his or her current life is a result of behavior in a former life.

Her Religion and His Religion Early feminist Charlotte Perkins Gilman (1976/1923) believed that “men’s religion” taught people to submit and obey rather than to think about and realistically confront situations. Consequently, she asserted, the monopolization of religious thoughts and doctrines by men contributed to intolerance and the subordination of women. Along with other feminist thinkers, Gilman concluded that “God the Mother” images could be useful as a means of encouraging people to be more cooperative and compassionate, rather than competitive and violent.

Not all people interpret religion in the same way. In virtually all religions, women have much less influence in establishing social definitions of appropriate gender roles both within the religious community and in the larger community. Therefore, women and men may belong to the same religious group, but their individual religion will not necessarily be a carbon copy of the group’s entire system of beliefs. In fact, women’s versions of any given religion probably differ markedly from men’s versions.

Religious symbolism and language typically create a social definition of the roles of men and women. For example, religious symbolism may depict the higher deities

as male and the lower deities as female. Sometimes, females are depicted as spiritual forces that are negative or evil. For instance, the Hindu goddess Kali represents men’s eternal battle against the evils of materialism. Historically, language has defined women as being nonexistent in the world’s major religions. Phrases such as “for all men” in Catholic and Episcopal services gradually have been changed to “for all”; however, some churches retain the traditional liturgy. Although there has been resistance, especially by women, to some of the terms, inclusive language is less common than older male terms for God.

Rational Choice Perspectives on Religion

In terms of religion, rational choice theory is based on the assumption that religion is essentially a rational response to human needs; however, the theory does not claim that any particular religious belief is necessarily true or more rational than another. The rational choice perspective views religion as a competitive marketplace in which religious organizations (suppliers) offer a variety of religions and religious products to potential followers (consumers),

who shop around for the religious theologies, practices, and communities that best suit them.

According to this approach, people need to know that life has a beneficial supernatural element, such as that there is meaning in life or that there is life after death, and they seek to find these rewards in various religious organizations. The rewards include explanations of the meaning of life and reassurances about overcoming death. However, because religious organizations cannot offer religious certainties, they instead offer compensators—a body of language and practices that compensates for some physical lack or frustrated goal. According to well-known sociologists of religion, Rodney Stark and William Bainbridge (1985), all religions offer compensators, such as a belief in heaven, personal fulfillment, and control over evil influences in the world, to offset the fact that they cannot offer certainty of an afterlife or other valued resources that potential followers and adherents might desire. Rational choice theory focuses on the process by which actors—individuals, groups, and communities—settle on one optimal outcome out of a

range of possible choices (a cost–benefit analysis). These compensators provide a range of possible choices for people in the face of a limited (or nonexistent) supply of the choice (certainty, for example) that they truly desire.

Some sociologists of religion have applied rational choice theory to an examination of the very competitive U.S. religious marketplace and have found that people are actively shopping around for beliefs, practices, and religious communities that best suit them. For example, in recent years some religious followers have been attracted to churches that preach the so-called prosperity gospel, which is based on the assumption that if you give your money to God, He will bless you with more money and other material possessions (such as a larger house and a luxury vehicle) that you desire. Several megachurches, including Joel Osteen’s Lakewood in Houston, T. D. Jakes’s Potter’s House of Dallas, and Creflo Dollar’s World Changers International Church near Atlanta, are based partly on teaching that suggests God wants people to be prosperous if they are “right” with Him (■ Figure 12.17).



Frank E. Lockwood/Lexington Herald-Leader/Tribune News Service/Getty Images

FIGURE 12.17 One of the largest places of worship in the United States is Joel Osteen’s Lakewood Church in Houston, Texas. This church broadcasts its message worldwide.

CONCEPT Quick Review

Sociological Perspectives on Education and Religion

	Education	Religion
Functionalist Perspective	One of the most important components of society: Schools teach students not only content but also to put group needs ahead of the individual's.	Sacred beliefs and rituals bind people together and help maintain social control.
Conflict Perspective	Schools perpetuate class, racial-ethnic, and gender inequalities through what they teach to whom.	Religion may be used to justify the status quo (Marx) or to promote social change (Weber).
Symbolic Interactionist Perspective	Labeling and the self-fulfilling prophecy are examples of how students and teachers affect one another as they interpret their interactions.	Religion may serve as a reference group for many people, but because of race, class, and gender, people may experience it differently.
Rational Choice Perspective		Religious persons and organizations, interacting within a competitive market framework, offer a variety of religions and religious products to consumers, who shop around for religious theologies, practices, and communities that best suit them.

TABLE 12.2 Characteristics of Churches and Sects

Characteristic	Church	Sect
Organization	Large, bureaucratic organization, led by a professional clergy	Small, faithful group, with high degree of lay participation
Membership	Open to all; members usually from upper and middle classes	Closely guarded membership, usually from lower classes
Type of worship	Formal, orderly	Informal, spontaneous
Salvation	Granted by God, as administered by the church	Achieved by moral purity
Attitude toward other institutions and religions	Tolerant	Intolerant

Based on the diverse teaching and practices of various religious bodies, adherents and prospective followers move among various religious organizations, with every major religious group simultaneously gaining and losing adherents. Although some find the religious home they seek, others decide to remain unaffiliated with any specific faith-based tradition. Based on the movement of possible adherents, religious groups challenge one another for followers, emphasize specific moral values, and create a civil society that offers followers a religious faith that does not unduly burden them.

The Concept Quick Review summarizes the major sociological perspectives on education and religion.

Types of Religious Organizations

Religious groups vary widely in their organizational structure. Although some groups are large and somewhat bureaucratically organized, others are small and have a relatively informal authority structure. Some require total

commitment from their members; others expect members to have only a partial commitment (see ■ Table 12.2). Sociologists have developed typologies or ideal types of religious organization to enable them to study a wide variety of religious groups. The most common categorization includes four types: ecclesia, church, sect, and cult.

Ecclesia

An *ecclesia* is a religious organization that is so integrated into the dominant culture that it claims as its membership all members of a society. Membership in the ecclesia occurs as a result of being born into the society rather than by any conscious decision on the part of individual members.

ecclesia

a religious organization that is so integrated into the dominant culture that it claims as its membership all members of a society.

The linkages between the social institutions of religion and government are often very strong in such societies. Although no true *ecclesia* exists in the contemporary world, the Anglican Church (the official church of England), the Lutheran church in Sweden and Denmark, the Roman Catholic church in Italy and Spain, and Islamic mosques in Iran and Pakistan come fairly close.

Churches, Denominations, and Sects

Unlike an *ecclesia*, a church is not considered to be a state religion; however, it may still have a powerful influence on political and economic arrangements in society. A **church** is a large, bureaucratically organized religious organization that tends to seek accommodation with the larger society in order to maintain some degree of control over it. Church membership is largely based on birth; children of church members are typically baptized as infants and become lifelong members of the church. Older children and adults may choose to join the church, but they are required to go through an extensive training program that culminates in a ceremony similar to the one that infants go through. Churches have a bureaucratic structure, and leadership is hierarchically arranged. Usually, the clergy have many years of formal education. Churches have very restrained services that appeal to the intellect rather than the emotions. Religious services are highly ritualized; they are led by clergy who wear robes, enter and exit in a formal processional, administer sacraments, and read services from a prayer book or other standardized liturgical format. The Lutheran church and the Episcopal church are two examples.

Midway between the church and the sect is a **denomination**—a large, organized religion characterized by accommodation to society but frequently lacking in the ability or intention to dominate society (Niebuhr, 1929). Denominations have a trained ministry, and although involvement by lay members is encouraged more than in the church, their participation is usually limited to particular activities, such as readings or prayers. Denominations tend to be more tolerant and less likely than churches to expel or excommunicate members. This form of organization is most likely to thrive in societies characterized by *religious pluralism*—a situation in which many religious groups exist because they have a special appeal to specific segments of the population. Perhaps because of its diversity, the United States has more denominations than any other country.

A **sect** is a relatively small religious group that has broken away from another religious organization to renew what it views as the original version of the faith. Unlike churches, sects offer members a more personal religion and an intimate relationship with a supreme being, depicted as taking an active interest in the individual's everyday life. Whereas churches use formalized prayers, often from a prayer book, sects have informal prayers composed at the time they are given. Typically, religious sects appeal to those who might be characterized as lower class, whereas denominations primarily appeal to the middle

and upper-middle classes and churches focus on the upper classes.

According to the church–sect typology, as members of a sect become more successful economically and socially, their religious organization is also likely to focus more on this world and less on the next. If some members of the sect do not achieve financial success, they may feel left behind as other members and the ministers shift their priorities. Eventually, this process will weaken some organizations, and people will split off to create new, less worldly versions of the group that will be more committed to “keeping the faith.” Those who defect to form a new religious organization may start another sect or form a cult (Stark and Bainbridge, 1981).

Cults (New Religious Movements)

Previously, sociologists defined a **cult** as a loosely organized religious group with practices and teachings outside the dominant cultural and religious traditions of a society. Because the term *cult* has assumed a negative and sometimes offensive meaning because of the beliefs and actions of a few highly publicized cults, some researchers now use the term *new religious movement (NRM)* and point out that a number of major world religions (including Judaism, Islam, and Christianity) and some denominations (such as the Mormons) started as cults. Also, most cults or NRMs do not exhibit the bizarre behavior or have the unfortunate ending that a few notorious groups have had in the past.

NRMs usually have a leader who exhibits charismatic characteristics (personal magnetism or mystical leadership) and possesses a unique ability to communicate and form attachments with others. An example was the late Reverend Sun Myung Moon, a former Korean electrical engineer who founded the Unification church, or “Moonies,” claiming God revealed to him that the Judgment Day was rapidly approaching. This former cult identified itself as “comprised of families striving to embody the ideal of true love and to establish a world of peace and unity among all peoples, races, and religions as envisioned by Reverend Sun Myung Moon. Members of the Unification Church accept and follow Reverend Moon’s particular religious teaching, the Divine Principle” (*Unification Church News*, 2011) (■ Figure 12.18). Reverend Moon died at the age of ninety-two in 2012. Initially, his movement flourished because it recruited new members through their personal attachments to present members. In the twenty-first century, it became more institutionalized. Other cult leaders did not fare so well for so long, including Jim Jones, whose ill-fated cult ended up committing mass suicide in Guyana in 1978, and Marshall Herff Applewhite (“Do”), who led his thirty-eight Heaven’s Gate followers to commit mass suicide at their Rancho Santa Fe, California, mansion after convincing them that the comet Hale-Bopp, which swung by Earth in late March 1997, would be their celestial chariot taking them to a higher level.



Kim Hong-Ji/Reuters

FIGURE 12.18 Mass wedding ceremonies of thousands of brides and grooms brought widespread media attention to the late Reverend Sun Myung Moon and the Unification church, which many people viewed as a religious cult.

What eventually happens to cults or NRMs? Over time, some disappear; however, others gradually transform into other types of religious organizations, such as sects or denominations. An example is Mary Baker Eddy's Christian Science church, which started as a cult but became an established denomination with mainstream methods of outreach, such as Christian Science Reading Rooms placed in office buildings or shopping malls, where individuals can learn of the group's beliefs while going about their routine activities. Other cults or new religious movements lose their "newness" as they are embraced, as Scientology has been, by celebrities such as Tom Cruise, John Travolta, and Kirstie Alley. However, some celebrities previously involved in Scientology have dropped out and even written scathing books about their negative experiences with the organization.

Trends in Religion in the United States

Religion in the United States is very diverse. Pluralism and religious freedom are among the cultural values most widely espoused, and no state church or single denomination predominates. As shown in ■ Figure 12.19, Protestants constitute the largest religious body in the United States, followed by Roman Catholics, Jews, Mormons, and others.

The Secularization Debate

Secularization is the process by which religious beliefs, practices, and institutions lose their significance in society and nonreligious values, principles, and institutions take their place. Secularization has two components: (1) a decline in

religious values and institutions in everyday life and (2) a corresponding increase in nonreligious values or principles and greater significance given to secular institutions. Although secularization has been widely studied and hotly debated, many scholars argue that levels of religiosity are not declining in the United States and other high-income nations. In fact, sociologist Peter Berger, who proposed the secularization theory, reconsidered his theory when he observed that modernity, rather than secularizing society, had contributed to a counter-secularization movement. Berger also found that modernity was accompanied by higher levels of *religiosity*—the way that people are influenced by religious beliefs and shape their social reality accordingly. Religiosity may also be referred to as religious commitment or "religiousness." Social scientists use various measures to determine religiosity, including the extent to which a person does one or more of the following:

(1) believes in and "feels" or experiences certain aspects of religion, (2) becomes involved in religious activities such as attending church or reading sacred texts, (3) believes in the teachings of the church, and (4) lives in accordance with those teachings and beliefs.

So, is secularization occurring in the twenty-first century? Although the U.S. religious landscape has fluid and diverse patterns, some trends have been identified that might support the secularization thesis. First, the number of people in the United States who do not identify with any religion has grown at a rapid rate. In 2012 one-fifth of the U.S. public, and one-third of adults under age thirty, indicated that they were religiously unaffiliated (Pew Research Center Religion & Public Life, 2012). As previously discussed, when the Pew Research Center examined trends from 2007 until 2012, it found that over that five-year period, the number of people who

church

a large, bureaucratically organized religious organization that tends to seek accommodation with the larger society in order to maintain some degree of control over it.

denomination

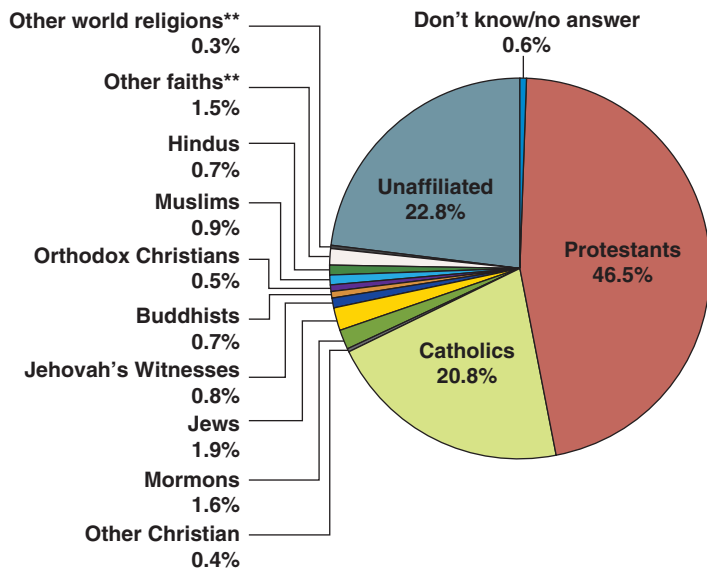
a large, organized religion characterized by accommodation to society but frequently lacking in the ability or intention to dominate society.

sect

a relatively small religious group that has broken away from another religious organization to renew what it views as the original version of the faith.

cult

a loosely organized religious group with practices and teachings outside the dominant cultural and religious traditions of a society.



**The "other world religions" category includes Sikhs, Baha'is, Taoists, Jains, and a variety of other world religions. The "other faiths" category includes Unitarians, New Age religions, Native American religions, and a number of other non-Christian faiths.

FIGURE 12.19 U.S. Religious Traditions' Membership

Source: Pew Research Center Religion & Public Life, 2019d.

considered themselves to be unaffiliated increased from slightly over 15 percent to just under 20 percent of all U.S. adults. These percentages included nearly 33 million individuals who stated that they had no particular religious affiliation and 13 million who self-described as atheists and agnostics (Pew Research Center Religion & Public Life, 2012). Although the Pew Research Center has not conducted another survey as extensive as the one described, researchers continue to find that rates of religious affiliation and church attendance are still declining in the United States as we enter the third decade of the twenty-first century. According to a 2019 Pew report, the religiously unaffiliated population (the "nones") have seen their numbers swell:

Self-described atheists now account for 4 percent of U.S. adults, up modestly but significantly from 2 percent in 2009; agnostics make up 5 percent of U.S. adults, up from 3 percent [in 2009]; and 17 percent of Americans now describe their religion as "nothing in particular," up from 12 percent in 2009. (Pew Research Center Religion & Public Life, 2019b).

One of the reasons that many unaffiliated persons indicate that they are not looking for a church or other religious institution to join is that they believe these organizations are too concerned with money and power, as well as overly emphasizing rules and becoming too involved in politics (Pew Research Center Religion & Public Life, 2012). Issues of secularization and the growing number of unaffiliated people in major national religion surveys will continue to be of concern to persons who identify themselves as "fundamentalists."

The Rise of Religious Fundamentalism

Fundamentalism is a traditional religious doctrine that is conservative, is typically opposed to modernity, and rejects "worldly pleasures" in favor of otherworldly spirituality. In the past, traditional fundamentalism primarily appealed to people from lower-income, rural, and/or southern backgrounds; however, newer fundamentalist movements have had a much wider appeal to people from all socioeconomic levels, geographical areas, and occupations in the United States. One reason for the rise of fundamentalism has been a reaction against modernization and secularization. Around the world, those who adhere to fundamentalism—whether they are Muslims, Christians, or followers of one of the other world religions—believe that sacred traditions must be revitalized. For example, public education in the United States has been the focus of some who follow the tenets of Christian fundamentalism. Various religious and political leaders vow to bring the Christian religion "back" into the public life of this country. They have been especially critical of educators who teach what they perceive to be *secular humanism*—the belief that human beings can become better through their own efforts rather than through belief in God and a religious conversion. According to some Christian fundamentalists, schoolchildren do not receive a fair and balanced picture of the Christian religion, but instead are taught that their parents' religion is inferior and perhaps irrational. But how might students and teachers who come from the diverse religious heritages feel about religious instruction or organized prayer in public schools? Many social analysts believe that such practices would cause conflict and perhaps discrimination on the basis of religion.

Looking Ahead: Education and Religion in the Future

Education and religion are powerful and influential forces because these social institutions instill in individuals the values, beliefs, and knowledge that many people believe are essential for the survival of individuals and entire cultures. Because education and religion are both socializing institutions, children and young people are particularly affected by the ideas that teachers and religious leaders impart to them. Through formal education or schooling, people learn about some aspects of the society in which they live and the dominant culture of which they are a part. In religious groups, individuals of all ages learn about the institutionalized beliefs and rituals of specific organizations that have been established to serve people's religious needs and other purposes.

What will the future of education be in the United States? The answer to this question depends on how successful elected officials are in getting their agendas through state legislatures or the U.S. Congress. In 2015 the

Obama administration implemented the Every Student Succeeds Act to replace the No Child Left Behind Act, which was implemented in 2001 by the Bush administration. Let's look first at No Child Left Behind (NCLB) because of its lasting influence on public education in this country. A primary purpose of NCLB was to close the achievement gap between rich and poor students by holding schools accountable for students' learning. The law required states to test every student's progress toward meeting established standards. School districts were required to report students' results to demonstrate that they were making progress toward meeting these standards. Schools that closed the education gap received additional federal dollars, but schools that did not show adequate progress lost funding and pupils. As testing became the focal point in schools and pressure increased on teachers and schools to improve test scores, investigations in a number of states uncovered scandals in which educators had tampered with children's standardized tests in an effort to improve both scores and their own performance reviews. Although scandals such as these have been rare overall, they pointed to the kind of pressure that the federal NCLB law put on students, teachers, and school administrators as performance requirements moved higher annually and students and schools were penalized if they were unable to reach the level of educational attainment that was expected.

The Every Student Succeeds Act, passed by the Obama administration in 2015, revised the previous act in order to return power to states and local districts so that they could determine how to improve their own troubled schools. Although the new legislation still requires federally mandated standardized testing, the law eliminated the negative consequences of the old law that were imposed on states and school districts that performed poorly.

By 2019, the Trump administration had shown very little interest in implementing the Every Student Succeeds Act. The law had transferred decisions about school improvement and accountability to states and school districts; however, many public schools had not made much progress in implementing the law and ensuring greater equity among all students (National Education Association [NEA], 2019). During that four-year period of time since passage of the law and limited action on the part of local, state, and federal educational authorities, many students had graduated from high school, students who were in elementary school when the law passed were now in middle school, and time was passing in the students' academic careers without many significant changes being made in the educational systems of which they were a part (NEA, 2019). It remains to be seen if another law will be passed to replace Every Student Succeeds or if schools will eventually start to achieve the accomplishments outlined in the Act. In sum, there has been little or no guidance and support for states on implementing this educational law while, at the same time, the Trump administration has rescinded some of the regulations that were part of the Act

and overall have deprioritized educational report as part of the Trump administration's agenda (Teachers College, Columbia University, 2019).

Other areas for needed reform include improving STEM education to help students become more competitive in the global marketplace. Encouraging innovation and ensuring opportunity for all are also priorities at the federal level. Having a top-tier educational system and providing high-quality job-training opportunities will provide people with the ability to be innovative and will offer greater opportunities that will help narrow the achievement gap. Improving the quality of underperforming schools and strengthening the teaching profession are other goals for the future.

Looking ahead to higher education, the United States has been outpaced internationally, and federal officials believe that it is important for our nation to maintain its position as the first in the world in four-year-degree attainment among twenty-five- to thirty-four-year-olds. A goal for the future is increasing participation of students from all levels of family income in higher education. Although most students from wealthy families attend college, slightly more than half of high school graduates from families in the bottom 25th percentile of families in income attend college, and the completion rate for those who do attend is about 25 percent. So, one major concern is how to help middle- and lower-income families afford college, and the federal administration has made suggestions such as free college tuition for community college students. However, it remains to be seen if funding will follow goals such as this.

In the meantime, colleges and universities continue to expand their focus while, at the same time, undergoing strenuous budget cuts coupled with increasing demands to meet the needs of diverse student populations. The tightening of financial resources available to colleges and universities will lead to even more schools seeking alternative ways to fund their operations. Some will further raise tuition; others will seek different sources of funding. Some schools will move beyond the United States to find ways to expand their base of operation. For example, some U.S. universities are expanding their educational operations to emerging nations where demand is high for certain kinds of curricula, such as advanced business and petroleum engineering courses in Qatar and other Middle Eastern countries. Experts suggest that "university globalization" is here to stay, with both the export of students from countries such as India and China to other countries to study and the development of top-tier research universities in countries, including China, Singapore, and Saudi Arabia, where students may study

fundamentalism

a traditional religious doctrine that is conservative, is typically opposed to modernity, and rejects "worldly pleasures" in favor of otherworldly spirituality.



Ted Pink/Alamy Stock Photo

FIGURE 12.20 The term *university globalization* refers to the export of students from countries such as India and China to nations where they study and immerse themselves in another culture. How does this process affect higher education in the United States and other countries?

without living abroad (see ■ Figure 12.20). Increasing numbers of U.S. students may go to school in these countries if their institutions offer opportunities, possibly at a lower cost, than do schools in the United States.

As discussed throughout this chapter, one of the major issues—present and future—is the part that education will play in reducing or maintaining and perpetuating social inequality. Education is an important social institution that must be sustained and enhanced because we know that simply having new initiatives and arguing over spending larger sums of money on education does not guarantee that the problems facing our schools will be resolved.

As we shift our focus to religion, we ask this: What significance will religion have in the future? In the twenty-first century, organized religion has seen a significant rise in power and importance in many regions of the world. It is interesting to note that religion has been empowered by three trends that secularization theory believed would be the cause of its death: (1) modernization, (2) democratization, and (3) globalization. With the growth of democracies

in numerous countries, including those Arab nations currently seeking change and some experiencing violence, religious actors have played a leading part in the political arena that was prohibited by former authoritarian regimes. Finally, globalization has produced a surge in the number of people and ideas that now travel around the world at much faster speeds than in the past, and this has made it possible for transnational actors such as religious groups to make themselves known to others and to use social media to bring people together quickly for collective action. How will these three trends play out in the future? According to Toft, Philpott, and Shah (2011),

Religion is far from being the only or even the most decisive factor in global politics. But it has played—and will continue to play—a key role. The 21st century has brought us a world radically different from the one secularization theory promised. We have no choice but to build new theories and devise fresh policy strategies for the religious age we live in, God's Century, not the secular age that never came.

As discussed in this chapter, religion can be a unifying force in societies and around the world or it can be a source of conflict and violence. It remains to be seen what the relationship between religion and peace and/or conflict will be in this century. Throughout history, people with religious beliefs have contributed to both peace and terrorism, democracy and authoritarianism, and reconciliation and civil war (Toft et al., 2011).

Debates over religion around the world, particularly issues such as secularization, fundamentalism, and violence perpetrated by religious extremists, will no doubt continue. Some studies show that the more conservative or fundamental expressions of religious traditions are the most likely to present major challenges to peaceful accords among individuals and nations. Why? It is because conservative or fundamentalist factions primarily focus on those issues that bring about discord, conflict, and even the use of violence to resolve perceived differences. It is important to consider ways in which the leaders and teachings of the world's religions can best help cope with the opportunities and challenges that we face in the twenty-first century. However, the challenge is greatest when we acknowledge that some peoples of the world may believe that their religion will be furthered only if they are able to remain aloof from, and perhaps even banish, Western civilization as we know it.

Regarding the future of religion in America, studies have shown that we have become more polarized religiously over the past fifty years, but this may not remain true in the future. In the future, more people may turn away from organized religions, creating a drop in U.S. religiosity, but that does not necessarily mean that these individuals have no religion at all. Many young people who indicate that they

have no religious affiliation do state that they believe in God or provide other indicators of their religious beliefs. The extent to which religion is linked to conservative politics and/or discussions of sexual morality and rights regarding abortion, LGBTQ rights, and other topics will play a central part in whether younger people become more (or less) involved in organized religion in the future.

In the third decade of the twenty-first century we may see not only the creation of new religious forms but also a dramatic revitalization of traditional forms of religious life. Religious fundamentalism has found a new audience among young people between the ages of eighteen and twenty-four. Some are Christian fundamentalists who will continue to emphasize Biblical literalism, which means that every word of the Bible is literally true (inerrancy). Other Christians are

creating their own modified version of what it means to be a Christian, a fundamentalist, or an evangelical (a person actively involved in sharing the “Good News” of his or her religion with others). Ultimately, one thing we can probably expect is considerable religious tension between Americans with differing beliefs and people around the globe who do not share our worldviews. All of these factors are going to make it imperative that we become more tolerant of others and hope that they will do likewise toward us.

As we have seen in this chapter, the debate continues over what education and religion should do and what the relationship between these two important social institutions should be. It will be up to your generation to work for greater understanding among the diverse people who make up our nation and the world.

Q&A Chapter Review

Use these questions and answers to check how well you’ve achieved the learning objectives set out at the beginning of this chapter.

LO1 Why are education and religion important areas of sociological inquiry in contemporary societies?

Education and religion are powerful and influential forces in contemporary societies. Both institutions impart values, beliefs, and knowledge considered essential to the social reproduction of individual personalities and entire cultures. For this reason, analysis of education and religion is central to a comprehensive understanding of sociology.

LO2 What are the key assumptions of the major sociological perspectives on education?

Functionalist, conflict, and symbolic interactionist perspectives on education all have different approaches to analyzing education. According to functionalists, education has both manifest functions (socialization, transmission of culture, multicultural education, social control, social placement, and change and innovation) and latent functions (keeping young people off the streets and out of trouble, matchmaking and producing social networks, and creating a generation gap). From a conflict perspective, education is used to perpetuate class, racial-ethnic, and gender inequalities through tracking, ability grouping, and a hidden curriculum that teaches subordinate groups conformity and obedience. Symbolic interactionists examine classroom dynamics and study ways in which practices such as labeling may become a self-fulfilling prophecy for some students.

LO3 What are some major problems faced by elementary and secondary schools in the United States?

Most educational funds come from state legislative appropriations and local property taxes. In difficult economic times, this means that schools must do without the necessary funds to provide students with teachers, supplies, and the best educational environment for learning. High dropout rates, racial segregation and resegregation, and equalizing educational opportunities for students are also among the many pressing issues facing U.S. public education today.

LO4 What are some of the key challenges associated with college education in the United States?

The funding of higher education is a central problem linked to crises in national and global economies. The problem of increasing costs of higher education for students is compounded by state budget shortfalls, which have caused funding for public higher education to be slashed. Declining state and federal support has become a major concern for colleges and universities because as enrollments drop, along with financial support, these institutions will have to find new sources of revenue, sharply reduce expenses, and rework administrative costs. The global economy also has a significant influence on the nature of higher education in contemporary societies. Other issues, such as the underrepresentation of minorities as students, a lack of faculty diversity, and problems of prejudice and discrimination, are also linked to larger inequalities in society.

LO5 What is religion, and what are the major categories of religion?

Religion is a social institution composed of a unified system of beliefs, symbols, and rituals, based on some sacred or supernatural realm, which guides human behavior, gives meaning to life, and unites believers into a community. In everyday language, religion seeks to answer questions such as why we exist, why people suffer and die, and what happens when we die. Religions have been classified into four major categories based on their dominant belief: simple supernaturalism, animism, theism, and transcendent idealism. *Simple supernaturalism* is the belief that supernatural forces affect people's lives either positively or negatively. *Animism* is the belief that plants, animals, or other elements of the natural world are endowed with spirits or life forces having an effect on events in society. *Theism* is a belief in a god or gods and includes monotheism and polytheism. *Transcendent idealism* is a belief in sacred principles of thought and conduct but it does not focus on worship of a god or gods.

LO6 What are the major sociological perspectives on religion?

We have discussed four major sociological perspectives on religion: functionalist, conflict, symbolic interactionist, and rational choice. According to functionalists, religion has three important functions in any society: (1) providing meaning and purpose to life, (2) promoting social cohesion and a sense of belonging, and (3) providing social control and support for the government. From a conflict perspective, religion can have negative consequences in that the capitalist class uses religion as a tool of domination to mislead workers about their true interests. Symbolic interactionists focus on a microlevel analysis of religion, examining the meanings that people give to religion and that they attach to religious symbols in their everyday life. According to the rational choice perspective, religious persons and

organizations offer a variety of religions and religious products to consumers who shop around for religious theologies, practices, and communities that best suit them.

LO7 What are the major types of religious organization?

Religious organizations can be categorized as ecclesia, churches, denominations, sects, and cults (now frequently referred to as new religious movements [NRMs]).

LO8 What are some major trends in religion in the United States?

One of the most important trends in religion has been the ongoing debate over secularization—the process by which religious beliefs, practices, and institutions lose their significance in society and nonreligious values, principles, and institutions take their place. Another trend in religion is the rise and perpetuation of religious fundamentalism—a traditional religious doctrine that is conservative, is typically opposed to modernity, and rejects worldly pleasures in favor of otherworldly spirituality. Fundamentalism has arisen as a reaction against modernization and secularization.

LO9 What are contemporary and future issues regarding education and religion in the United States?

Even though they are surrounded by controversy, both education and religion continue to be important social institutions in the twenty-first century. Major contemporary issues in education include continuing debates about how schools should be funded, what should be taught, and how student learning and other outcomes should be assessed. The future of education may hinge on which elected officials are able to get their agendas for prekindergarten through college passed by state legislatures and the U.S. Congress. For-profit institutions may also play an increasing controversial role in the future of education in the United States.

Key Terms

animism 362

church 370

civil religion 365

credentialism 350

cult 370

cultural capital 347

denomination 370

ecclesia 369

education 345

fundamentalism 372

hidden curriculum 349

profane 360

religion 360

sacred 360

sect 370

secularization 363

tracking 348

Questions for **Critical Thinking**

- 1 Why does so much controversy exist over what should be taught in U.S. public schools?
- 2 How are the values and attitudes you learned from your family reflected in your beliefs about education and religion?
- 3 How would you design a research project to study the effects of civil religion on everyday life? What kind of data would be most accessible?
- 4 If Durkheim, Marx, and Weber were engaged in a discussion about education and religion, on what topics might they agree? On what topics would they disagree?

Answers to **Sociology Quiz**

Religion and Education

1	False	Because of the diversity of religious backgrounds of the early settlers, no mention of religion was made in the original Constitution. Even the sole provision that currently exists (the establishment clause of the First Amendment) does not speak directly of the issue of religious learning in public education.
2	False	Obviously, contemporary sociologists hold strong beliefs and opinions on many subjects; however, most of them do not think that it is their role to advocate specific stances on a topic. Early sociologists were less inclined to believe that they had to be "value-free." For example, Durkheim strongly advocated that education should have a moral component and that schools had a responsibility to perpetuate society by teaching a commitment to the common morality.
3	True	Most public school revenue comes from local funding through property taxes and state funding from a variety of sources, including sales taxes, personal income taxes, and, in some states, oil revenues or proceeds from lotteries.
4	False	As increases in traditional public schools, public charter schools, and homeschool enrollment have occurred in the 2010s, private school enrollment has decreased. Most of this growth has occurred in charter schools and in homeschooling of students, rather than in traditional public schools. In some areas of the country, enrollment in some private, religiously affiliated schools has remained constant, but in other regions, enrollment in private schools, particularly parochial, Catholic schools, has decreased.
5	True	It is estimated that nearly one-third of U.S. adults may have left the faith in which they were raised (and might have participated while in school) in favor of another religion or no religion at all (often referred to as religious "nones" or "unaffiliated" in surveys).
6	False	Attempts to remove textbooks and other required reading materials occur at all levels of schooling. For example, cases have involved removing Chaucer's "The Miller's Tale" and Aristophanes's Lysistrata from high school curricula.
7	True	Some parents choose homeschooling for religious reasons; others embrace it for secular reasons, including fear for their children's safety and concerns about the quality of public schools.
8	False	Ultimately, issues relating to the separation of church and state, including religious instruction in public schools, are constitutional issues that are decided by the U.S. Supreme Court in the absence of a constitutional amendment.

Sources: Based on American Institute for Research, 2019; Khazan, 2019; Pew Research Center Religion & Public Life, 2019d; Sullivan, 2019.





Politics and the Economy in Global Perspective

13

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- 1 Describe** the key aspects of power and authority.
- 2 Describe** the major political systems around the world.
- 3 Explain** the pluralist and elite models of power.
- 4 Discuss** the features of the U.S. political system.
- 5 Describe** the major economic systems around the world.
- 6 Discuss** the key characteristics of capitalism, socialism, and mixed economies.
- 7 Explain** the characteristics of professions and other occupations.
- 8 Describe** the concepts of contingent work, the underground (informal) economy, unemployment, labor unions, and worker activism in the United States.
- 9 Discuss** politics, economy, and employment in the United States from contemporary and future perspectives.

Rob Crandall/Alamy Stock Photo

SOCIOLOGY & **Everyday Life**

Facts and “Alternative Facts” in Politics and Media

Shortly after the 2016 election of Donald J. Trump to the Presidency, White House press secretary Sean Spicer made a widely disputed claim on global media that Trump’s inaugural ceremony had the largest audience in history. The crowd-size controversy blew up shortly thereafter when President Trump bragged about the inauguration crowd size and complained about inadequate media coverage about the size of the crowd. As this debate grew more intense, Kellyanne Conway, senior adviser to Trump, was interviewed on NBC’s *Meet the Press* by journalist Chuck Todd, who questioned her on why the White House press secretary had lied about something as trivial as the inaugural crowd size:

Conway: “You’re saying it’s a falsehood and Sean Spicer, our press secretary, gave alternative facts to that.”

Todd: “Alternative facts aren’t facts. They are falsehoods.” . . . “What was the motive to have this ridiculous litigation of crowd size?”

Conway: “Your job is not to call things ridiculous that are said by our press secretary and our president. That’s not your job.”

Todd: “Can you please answer the question? Why did he do this? You have not answered it—it’s only one question.”

Conway: “I’ll answer it this way: Think about what you just said to your viewers. That’s why we feel compelled to go out and clear the air and put alternative facts out there.”

Todd: “Alternative facts are not facts. They are falsehoods.”

Conway: “If we’re going to keep referring to the press secretary in those types of terms I think we’re

going to have to rethink our relationship here” (Bradner, 2017).

This heated exchange between a TV moderator and an official in a presidential administration was just the beginning of years of controversy involving the role and ethical responsibilities of the news media and of political officials in the United States. According to Trump administration critics, an *alternative fact* is nothing more than a falsehood, an untruth, or a delusion. By contrast, other media personalities



Georges DE Kerleff/UP/Alamy Stock Photo

The day after President Donald J. Trump’s inauguration ceremony on January 20, 2017, he and his spokespersons proclaimed that the audience at his inauguration had been the largest in U.S. history. Other governmental authorities and media sources contested this claim, and the argument over crowd size went on for days. (Shown here are people attending the ceremony on the National Mall in Washington, D.C.) Why are some elected officials so concerned about inconsequential issues such as attendance at an inauguration when so many pressing concerns need to be addressed by our nation’s leadership?

The relationship among politics, the economy, and the media has been a complicated one for many years. How about you? Are you interested in the political process? Do you follow media coverage of politics and the economy? How much of your information comes from mainstream journalists or social media? As you are aware, the political landscape has been vastly modified in a very short period of time as a result of global mass media and instantaneous social media sites. Only a few years ago, voters learned about political candidates from stump speeches, newspapers, and the evening news on television. Today, many people learn about elections from cable TV news and

social media sites. The line between traditional and social media has blurred rapidly. Like such rapid changes in the political media landscape, the U.S. economy has also seen dramatic changes in recent years that have affected the lives of millions of people in the United States and worldwide.

Sociologists are concerned about how the social institutions of politics and the economy operate and how the decisions made in these social arenas affect people’s everyday lives. In this chapter we discuss the intertwining nature of contemporary politics, the economy, and the media. Before reading on, test your knowledge of politics and the media by taking the “Sociology and Everyday Life” quiz. ●

defended Ms. Conway's "alternative facts" by stating that she merely provided a "different perspective" on the topic. Since this discussion took place, media outlets including the *New York Times* have highlighted ways in which the Trump administration has continually attacked the news media and undermined "the U.S. reputation for press freedom" (Grynbaum, 2019). Similarly, a Pew Research Center study found that Americans' confidence in news coverage is closely linked to partisan dynamics and to a person's opinion about the president (Gottfried et al., 2019).

Extensive controversies among media spokespersons, political officials, and business leaders are not new, nor is the idea of something similar to "alternative facts" or "having different realities" on opposing sides of a debate. What is surprising, however, is the acceptance of untruthful information (such as the denial of climate change), even when such information conclusively can be proven false, and the corresponding lack of civility that has accompanied interactions among spokespersons in politics, business and the economy, and the media.

How Much Do You Know About Politics and the Media?

TRUE	FALSE		
T	F	1	More than 90 percent of American adults use the Internet, and many of them also participate in social media sites where political information is available.
T	F	2	Studies have found that most users of social media sites find these sites to be "very important" or "somewhat important" in keeping up with political news or discussing political issues with others.
T	F	3	The majority of social media users find it stressful to talk politics on social media sites with those whom they disagree.
T	F	4	Persons using social media sites are often surprised about what their social media contacts post online regarding politics because they assumed their acquaintances held political beliefs closer to their own.
T	F	5	Young adults and African Americans are more likely than older white Americans and Hispanics to see social networking sites as important for keeping up with political news and discussing political issues with others.
T	F	6	Many social media users indicate that they have changed their political views based on reading posts by others about specific issues.
T	F	7	Because more media users have turned to social media for information about politics, traditional journalists have more active roles in conducting extensive investigations into the backgrounds and political platforms of candidates.
T	F	8	The number of viewers of local TV news programming continues to decrease each year, even in presidential election years.

Answers can be found at the end of the chapter.

Politics, Power, and Authority

Politics is the social institution through which power is acquired and exercised by some people and groups. In contemporary societies the government is the primary political system. **Government** is the formal organization that has the legal and political authority to regulate the relationships among members of a society and between the society and those outside its borders. Some social analysts refer to the government as the **state**—the political entity that possesses

politics

the social institution through which power is acquired and exercised by some people and groups.

government

the formal organization that has the legal and political authority to regulate the relationships among members of a society and between the society and those outside its borders.

state

the political entity that possesses a legitimate monopoly over the use of force within its territory to achieve its goals.

a legitimate monopoly over the use of force within its territory to achieve its goals.

Whereas political science focuses primarily on power and its distribution in different types of political systems, *political sociology* is the area of sociology that examines politics and the government. Political sociology primarily focuses on the *social circumstances* of politics and explores how the political arena and its actors are intertwined with social institutions such as the economy, religion, education, and the media.

What is the relationship between politics and media? Recent research suggests that this relationship is dramatically changing in an era where various forms of media are omnipresent twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, or “24/7.” As early as 1998, sociologist Michael Parenti argued that the media distort—either intentionally or unintentionally—the information they provide to citizens. According to Parenti, the media use their power to influence public opinion in favor of management over labor, corporations over those who criticize them, affluent whites over racial and ethnic minorities, political officials over protestors, and free-market capitalists over those who are in favor of public-sector development. More than two decades later, if we look at the overall relationship among politics, government, and both the “traditional” media and social media, we can see that some of Parenti’s assertions remain relevant regarding the use, distribution, and possible abuse of power. The role of social media has grown exponentially in influencing voters in the U.S. elections. Technology has provided new ways for political leaders to assert their power and authority over other individuals, groups, and nations.

Power and Authority

Power is the ability of persons or groups to achieve their goals despite opposition from others (Weber, 1968/1922). Through the use of persuasion, authority, or force, some people are able to get others to acquiesce to their demands. Consequently, power is a *social relationship* that involves both leaders and followers. Power is also a dimension in the structure of social stratification. Persons in positions of power control valuable resources of society—including wealth, status, comfort, and safety—and are able to direct the actions of others while protecting and enhancing the privileged social position of their class (Domhoff, 2014). And, according to sociologist G. William Domhoff (2002), the media tend to reflect “the biases of those with access to them—corporate leaders, government officials, and policy experts.”

Shifting to the bigger picture: What about power on a global basis? Although the most basic form of power is physical violence or force, most political leaders do not want to base their power on force alone. Instead, they seek to legitimize their power by turning it into **authority**—power that people accept as legitimate rather than coercive.

Ideal Types of Authority

Who is most likely to accept authority as legitimate and adhere to it? People have a greater tendency to accept authority as legitimate if they are economically or

politically dependent on those who hold power. They may also accept authority more readily if it reflects their own beliefs and values. Weber’s outline of three *ideal types* of authority—traditional, charismatic, and rational–legal—shows how different bases of legitimacy are tied to a society’s economy.

Traditional Authority According to Weber, **traditional authority** is power that is legitimized on the basis of long-standing custom. In preindustrial societies the authority of traditional leaders, such as kings, queens, pharaohs, emperors, and religious dignitaries, is usually grounded in religious beliefs and custom. For example, British kings and queens have historically traced their authority from God. Members of subordinate classes obey a traditional leader’s edicts out of economic and political dependency and sometimes personal loyalty. However, as societies industrialize, traditional authority is challenged by a more complex division of labor and by the wider diversity of people who now inhabit the area as a result of high immigration rates.

Gender, race, and class relations are closely intertwined with traditional authority. Political scientist Zillah R. Eisenstein suggests that *racialized patriarchy*—the continual interplay of race and gender—reinforces traditional structures of power in contemporary societies. According to Eisenstein (1994: 2), “Patriarchy differentiates women from men while privileging men. Racism simultaneously differentiates people of color from whites and privileges whiteness. These processes are distinct but intertwined.”

Charismatic Authority **Charismatic authority** is power legitimized on the basis of a leader’s exceptional personal qualities or the demonstration of extraordinary insight and accomplishment that inspire loyalty and obedience from followers. Charismatic leaders may be politicians, soldiers, or entertainers, among others.

Charismatic authority tends to be temporary and relatively unstable; it derives primarily from individual leaders (who may change their minds, leave, or die) and from an administrative structure usually limited to a small number of faithful followers. For this reason, charismatic authority often becomes routinized. The **routinization of charisma** occurs when charismatic authority is succeeded by a bureaucracy controlled by a rationally established authority or by a combination of traditional and bureaucratic authority. According to Weber (1968/1922: 1148), “It is the fate of charisma to recede . . . after it has entered the permanent structures of social action.”

Rational–Legal Authority According to Weber, **rational–legal authority** is power legitimized by law or written rules and regulations. Rational–legal authority—also known as *bureaucratic authority*—is based on an organizational structure that includes a clearly defined division of labor, hierarchy of authority, formal rules,



ALBERTO PIZZOLI/Getty Images



Tim Graham/Hulton Archive/Getty Images



Kevin Dietsch/Pool via CN/dpa picture alliance/Alamy Stock Photo

FIGURE 13.1 Max Weber's three types of global authority are shown here in global perspective. Pope Francis is an example of traditional authority sanctioned by custom. Mother Teresa exemplifies charismatic authority, for her leadership was based on personal qualities. The U.S. Supreme Court represents rational-legal authority, which depends on established rules and procedures.

and impersonality. Power is legitimized by procedures; if leaders obtain their positions in a procedurally correct manner (such as by election or appointment), they have the right to act (■ Figure 13.1).

Rational-legal authority is held by elected or appointed government officials and by officers in a formal organization. However, authority is invested in the *office*, not in the *person* who holds the office. For example, although the U.S. Constitution grants rational-legal authority to the office of the presidency, a president who fails to uphold the public trust may be removed from office. In contemporary society the media may play an important role in bringing to light allegations about presidents or other elected officials, including President Richard M. Nixon in the 1970s Watergate investigation, the 1990s sex scandal involving President Bill Clinton, ethics charges of money laundering involving members of Congress during the Obama administration, and a wide variety of charges and convictions of federal officials that have taken place during the Trump administration.

In a rational-legal system, the governmental bureaucracy is the apparatus responsible for creating and enforcing rules in the public interest. Weber believed that rational-legal authority was the only means to attain efficient, flexible, and competent regulation under a rule of law. Weber's three types of authority are summarized in the Concept Quick Review.

Political Systems in Global Perspective

Political systems as we know them today have evolved slowly. In the earliest societies, politics was not an entity separate from other aspects of life. Political institutions first emerged in agrarian societies as they acquired surpluses and developed greater social inequality. Elites took control

power

according to Max Weber, the ability of persons or groups to achieve their goals despite opposition from others.

authority

power that people accept as legitimate rather than coercive.

traditional authority

power that is legitimized on the basis of long-standing custom.

charismatic authority

power legitimized on the basis of a leader's exceptional personal qualities or the demonstration of extraordinary insight and accomplishment that inspire loyalty and obedience from followers.

routinization of charisma

the process by which charismatic authority is succeeded by a bureaucracy controlled by a rationally established authority or by a combination of traditional and bureaucratic authority.

rational-legal authority

power legitimized by law or written rules and regulations.

CONCEPT Quick Review

Weber's Three Types of Authority

	Description	Examples
Traditional	Legitimized by long-standing custom Subject to erosion as traditions weaken	Patrimony (authority resides in the traditional leader supported by larger social structures, as in the old British monarchy) Patriarchy (rule by men occupying traditional positions of authority, as in the family)
Charismatic	Based on leader's personal qualities Temporary and unstable	Napoleon Adolf Hitler Martin Luther King, Jr. César Chávez Mother Teresa
Rational-Legal	Legitimized by rationally established rules and procedures Authority residing in the office, not the person	Modern British Parliament U.S. presidency, Congress, federal bureaucracy

of politics and used custom or traditional authority to justify their position. When cities developed circa 3500–3000 BCE, the *city-state*—a city whose power extended to adjacent areas—became the center of political power.

Nation-states as we know them began to develop in Europe between the twelfth and fifteenth centuries. A *nation-state* is a unit of political organization that has recognizable national boundaries and whose citizens possess specific legal rights and obligations. Nation-states emerge as countries develop specific geographic territories and acquire greater ability to defend their borders. Improvements in communication and transportation make it possible for people in a larger geographic area to share a common language and culture. As charismatic and traditional authority are superseded by rational-legal authority, legal standards come to prevail in all areas of life, and the nation-state claims a monopoly over the legitimate use of force.

There are nearly 200 independent nation-states throughout the world today, and everyone is born, lives, and dies under the auspices of a nation-state. Four main types of political systems are found in nation-states: monarchy, authoritarianism, totalitarianism, and democracy.

Monarchy

Monarchy is a political system in which power resides in one person or family and is passed from generation to generation through lines of inheritance (■ Figure 13.2). Monarchies are most common in agrarian societies and are associated with traditional authority patterns. However, the relative power of monarchs has varied across nations, depending on religious, political, and economic conditions.



Chris Jackson/Getty Images

FIGURE 13.2 Through its many ups and downs, the British royal family has remained a symbol of Great Britain's monarchy. Monarchies typically pass power from generation to generation. Shown here are four generations of the British monarchy in the twenty-first century.

Absolute monarchs claim a hereditary right to rule (based on membership in a noble family) or a divine right to rule (a God-given right to rule that legitimizes the exercise of power). In limited monarchies, rulers depend on powerful members of the nobility to retain their thrones. Unlike absolute monarchs, *limited monarchs* are not considered to be above the law. In *constitutional monarchies*, the royalty serves as symbolic rulers or heads of state while actual authority is held by elected officials in national parliaments. In present-day monarchies such as the United Kingdom, Sweden, Spain, and the Netherlands, members of royal families primarily perform ceremonial functions. In the United Kingdom, for example, the media often focus large amounts of time and attention on the royal family but concentrate on the personal lives of its members.

Authoritarianism

Authoritarianism is a political system controlled by rulers who deny popular participation in government. A few authoritarian regimes have been absolute monarchies whose rulers claim a hereditary right to their position and where the final decision on issues rests with the monarch. Today, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and Swaziland are examples of absolute monarchies. In *dictatorships*, power is gained and held by a single individual. Pure dictatorships are rare; all rulers need the support of the military and the backing of business elites to maintain their position. *Military juntas* result when military officers seize power from the government, as has happened in recent decades in Argentina, Chile, and Haiti. Currently, authoritarian regimes exist in Cuba and in the People's Republic of China. Authoritarian regimes seek to control the media and to suppress coverage of any topics or information that does not reflect upon the regime in a favorable light.

Totalitarianism

Totalitarianism is a political system in which the state seeks to regulate all aspects of people's public and private lives. Totalitarianism relies on modern technology to monitor and control people; mass propaganda and electronic surveillance are widely used to influence people's thinking and control their actions. The World War II-era Nazi Party in Germany is an example of a totalitarian regime: Military leaders sought to control all aspects of national life, not just government operations. Other examples include the former Soviet Union, with vestiges of this approach remaining in contemporary Russian leadership.

To keep people from rebelling, totalitarian governments enforce conformity. People are denied the right to assemble for political purposes, access to information is strictly controlled, and secret police enforce compliance, creating an environment of constant fear and suspicion.

Many nations do not recognize totalitarian regimes as being the legitimate government of a particular country. Afghanistan in the year 2001 was an example. As the war

on terrorism began in the aftermath of the September 11 terrorist attacks on the United States, many people developed a heightened awareness of the Taliban regime, which ruled most of Afghanistan and was engaged in fierce fighting to capture the rest of the country. The Taliban regime maintained absolute control over the Afghan people in most of that nation, including requiring that all Muslims take part in prayer five times each day and that women wear the hijab (veil). Since military action commenced in Afghanistan, most of what U.S. residents have known about the Taliban, the war, and its aftermath has been based on media reports and "expert opinions" expressed on television and the Internet.

Democracy

Democracy is a political system in which the people hold the ruling power either directly or through elected representatives. The literal meaning of *democracy* is "rule by the people" (from the Greek words *demos*, meaning "the people," and *kratein*, meaning "to rule"). In an ideal-type democracy, people would actively and directly rule themselves. *Direct participatory democracy* requires that citizens be able to meet together regularly to debate and decide the issues of the day. Because there are approximately 329.45 million people in the United States today, it would be impossible for everyone to come together in one place for a meeting.

In countries such as the United States, Canada, Australia, and the United Kingdom, people have a voice in the government through **representative democracy**, whereby citizens elect representatives to serve as bridges between themselves and the government. The U.S. Constitution requires that each state have two senators and a minimum of one member in the House of Representatives. The number of voting representatives in the House (435 seats) has not changed since the apportionment following the 1910 census; however, those 435 seats are reapportioned based on an increase or decrease in a state's population as shown in census data gathered every ten years.

monarchy

a political system in which power resides in one person or family and is passed from generation to generation through lines of inheritance.

authoritarianism

a political system controlled by rulers who deny popular participation in government.

totalitarianism

a political system in which the state seeks to regulate all aspects of people's public and private lives.

democracy

a political system in which the people hold the ruling power either directly or through elected representatives.

representative democracy

a form of democracy whereby citizens elect representatives to serve as bridges between themselves and the government.

In a representative democracy, elected representatives are supposed to convey the concerns and interests of those they represent, and the government is expected to be responsive to the wishes of the people. Elected officials are held accountable to the people through elections. However, representative democracy is not always equally accessible to all people in a nation. Throughout U.S. history, members of subordinate racial-ethnic groups have been denied full participation in the democratic process. Gender and social class have also limited some people's democratic participation.

Even representative democracies are not all alike. As compared to the winner-takes-all elections in the United States, which are usually decided by the candidate who wins the most votes, the majority of European elections are based on a system of proportional representation, meaning that each party is represented in the national legislature according to the proportion of votes that party received. For example, a party that won 40 percent of the vote would receive 40 seats in a 100-seat legislative body, and a party receiving 20 percent of the votes would receive 20 seats.

Perspectives on Power and Political Systems

Is political power in the United States concentrated in the hands of the few or distributed among the many? Sociologists and political scientists have suggested many different answers to this question; however, two prevalent models of power have emerged: pluralist and elite.

Functionalist Perspectives: The Pluralist Model

The pluralist model is rooted in a functionalist perspective that assumes that people share a consensus on central concerns, such as freedom and protection from harm, and that the government serves important functions no other institution can fulfill. According to Emile Durkheim (1933/1893), the purpose of government is to socialize people to be good citizens, to regulate the economy so that it operates effectively, and to provide necessary services for citizens. Contemporary functionalists state the four main functions as follows: (1) maintaining law and order, (2) planning and directing society, (3) meeting social needs, and (4) handling international relations, including warfare (see ■ Figure 13.3).

But what happens when people do not agree on specific issues or concerns? Functionalists suggest that divergent viewpoints lead to a system of political pluralism, in which the government functions as an arbiter between competing interests and viewpoints. According to the *pluralist model*, power in political systems is widely dispersed throughout many competing interest groups.

In the pluralist model the diverse needs of women and men, people of all religions and racial-ethnic backgrounds, and the wealthy, middle class, and poor are met by political

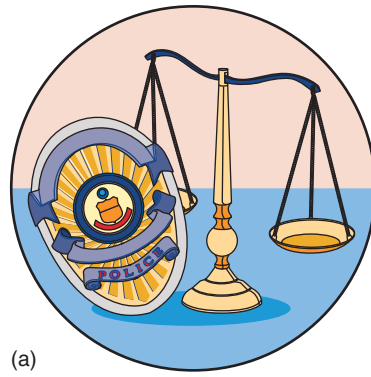
leaders who engage in a process of bargaining, accommodation, and compromise. Competition among leadership groups in government, business, labor, education, law, medicine, and consumer organizations, among others, helps prevent abuse of power by any one group. Everyday people can influence public policy by voting in elections, participating in existing special interest groups, or forming new ones to gain access to the political system. In sum, power is widely dispersed, and leadership groups that wield influence on some decisions are not the same groups that may be influential in other decisions.

Special Interest Groups *Special interest groups* are political coalitions made up of individuals or groups that share a specific interest they wish to protect or advance with the help of the political system. Examples of special interest groups include the AFL-CIO (representing the majority of labor unions) and public interest or citizens' groups such as the Population Connection and the American Conservative Union.

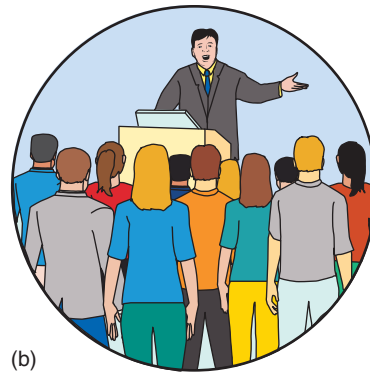
What purpose do special interest groups serve in the political process? According to some analysts, these groups help people advocate their own interests and further their causes. Broad categories of special interest groups include banking, business, education, energy, the environment, health, labor, persons with a disability, religious groups, retired persons, women, and those espousing a specific ideological viewpoint; obviously, many groups overlap in interests and membership. Special interest groups are also referred to as *pressure groups* (because they put pressure on political leaders) or *lobbies*. Lobbies are often referred to in terms of the organization they represent or the single issue on which they focus—for example, the “gun lobby” and the “dairy lobby.” The people who are paid to influence legislation on behalf of specific clients are referred to as *lobbyists*.

Over the past fifty years, special interest groups have become more involved in “single-issue politics,” in which political candidates are often supported or rejected solely on the basis of their views on a specific issue—such as abortion, gun control, LGBTQ rights, or the environment. Single-issue groups derive their strength from the intensity of their beliefs; leaders have little room to compromise on issues.

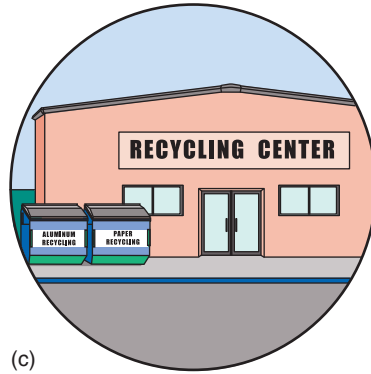
Political Action Committees For many years, the funding of lobbying efforts has been a hotly debated issue. Numerous attempts have been made to limit campaign contributions and expenditures to ensure that wealthy and influential individuals and organizations are not able to silence the voices of people who do not have equal resources. Reforms in campaign finance laws in the 1970s set limits on direct contributions to political candidates and led to the creation of *political action committees (PACs)*—organizations of special interest groups that solicit contributions from donors and fund campaigns to help elect (or defeat) candidates based on their stances on specific issues. As the cost of running for political office has skyrocketed, candidates have relied more on PACs for financial assistance. Advertising, staff,



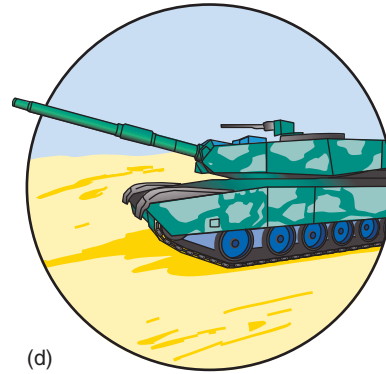
(a)



(b)



(c)



(d)

FIGURE 13.3 Government from a Functionalist Perspective

From the functionalist perspective, government serves important functions that no other institution can fulfill. Contemporary functionalists identify four main functions: (a) maintaining law and order, (b) planning and directing society, (c) meeting social needs, and (d) handling international relations, including warfare.

Source: Designed by the author.

direct-mail operations, telephone banks, computers, consultants, travel expenses, office rentals, and other expenses incurred in political campaigns make PAC money vital to candidates.

Some PACs represent the “public interest” and ideological interest groups such as LGBTQQ rights or the National Rifle Association. Other PACs represent the capitalistic interests of large corporations. Realistically, PACs do not represent members of the least-privileged sectors of society; there are no SNAP (food stamp) PACs to try to prevent significant reductions in funding as proposed by the Trump administration in 2020, for example.

Various efforts have been made to curb excessive spending in political elections. As an outgrowth of record-setting campaign spending in the 1996 national election, Congress passed the 2002 McCain–Feingold campaign finance law prohibiting “soft money” contributions (which are made outside the limits imposed by federal election law). This law pertains to federal elections only and does not include state or local elections.

But a shift occurred in 2010, when the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in *Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission* that corporations and other organizations could bypass existing spending limits by giving unlimited amounts to “independent groups” that support candidates

(but not to the candidates themselves). In this decision the court struck down a provision of the McCain–Feingold Act that prohibited both for-profit and not-for-profit corporations and unions from broadcasting “electioneering communications,” defined as a broadcast, cable, or satellite communication that mentioned a candidate within sixty days of a general election or thirty days of a primary. The court’s decision was made in terms of First Amendment rights, based on the assumption that a decision to spend money in support of a political cause or candidate was similar to giving a speech or carrying a campaign sign and thus protected by the First Amendment (Toobin, 2011). This controversial decision was criticized for granting lobbyists for special interests even more power than they previously held in Washington, while average Americans were further

pluralist model

an analysis of political systems that views power as being widely dispersed throughout many competing interest groups.

political action committees (PACs)

organizations of special interest groups that solicit contributions from donors and fund campaigns to help elect (or defeat) candidates based on their stances on specific issues.

downgraded in their efforts to support a political candidate. Clearly, the court's decision contributed to the rise of *super-PACs*, which were major contributors in the 2012, 2016, and 2020 elections.

Rise of the Super-PACs Super-PACs came into existence following two important legal cases. In *SpeechNow.org v. Federal Election Commission*, a federal court ruled that it was a violation of the First Amendment to establish limitations on individual contributions to independent organizations that seek to influence elections. In the second case, as previously discussed, the U.S. Supreme Court decided that it was a violation of the U.S. Constitution to establish spending limits for corporations and unions. This decision opened the door for corporations, unions, and other organizations to bypass existing spending limits and give unlimited amounts of money to various "independent groups" that support candidates, but not to candidates or specific political parties.

What is the difference between a PAC and a super-PAC? Simply stated, PACs have restrictions on who may contribute and how much they can give, whereas super-PACs are unrestricted in who can give and how much they may donate. As a result, large sums of money flow into candidates' campaign coffers from entities that have specific agendas. Super-PACs can indirectly contribute money to candidates who will uphold the best interests of specific interest groups, corporations, or unions, or they can provide funds to defeat candidates whose political platforms will not benefit the major contributors of the super-PAC. The presidential campaign in 2012 was the first

election in which super-PACs were involved in supporting campaigns, as shown in ■ Figure 13.4. It remains to be seen what the longer-term effects of these massive contributions from corporations, unions, and other major donors will be on U.S. elections and the political process.

Based on a functionalist approach, some special interest groups and political action committees continue to represent the broader needs and interests of many individuals, groups, and organizations in society. However, what happens when they become narrowly focused on the issues that benefit only a very small percentage of elites at the top of the pyramid, as has recently happened with some super-PACs? At this juncture we must turn to conflict perspectives and elite models for a better explanation of how politics and government operate when power is more concentrated.

Conflict Perspectives: Elite Models

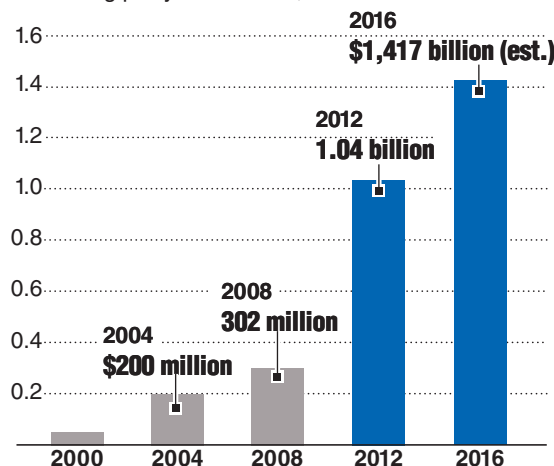
Although conflict theorists acknowledge that the government serves a number of important purposes in society, they assert that government exists for the benefit of wealthy or politically powerful elites who use the government to impose their will on the masses. According to the *elite model*, power in political systems is concentrated in the hands of a small group of elites, and the masses are relatively powerless. The pluralist model and the elite model are compared in ■ Figure 13.5.

Contemporary elite models are based on the assumption that decisions are made by the elites, who agree on the basic values and goals of society. However, the needs and concerns of the masses are not often given

Outside spending growing exponentially

Total outside spending, by presidential election cycle

Excluding party committees, in billions



Types of spenders in 2016:



© 2016 MCT

FIGURE 13.4 Outside Spending including Super PACS in the 2016 Presidential Election

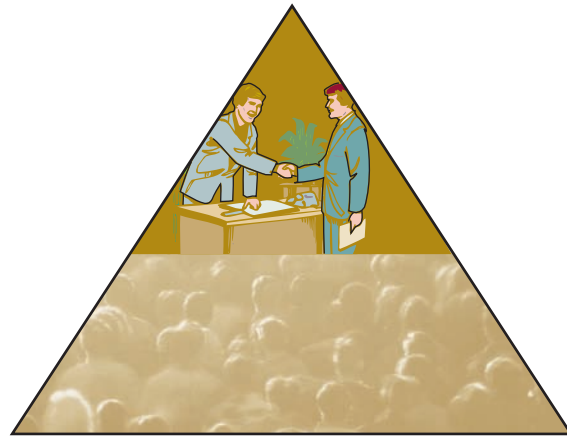
Sources: Revised and updated by author based on issueone.org, 2019 and OpenSecrets.org, Center for Responsive Politics, 2020.

PLURALIST MODEL



- Decisions are made on behalf of the people by leaders who engage in bargaining, accommodation, and compromise.
- Competition among leadership groups makes abuse of power by any one group difficult.
- Power is widely dispersed, and people can influence public policy by voting.
- Public policy reflects a balance among competing interest groups.

ELITE MODEL



- Decisions are made by a small group of elite people.
- Consensus exists among the elite on the basic values and goals of society.
- Power is highly concentrated at the top of a pyramid-shaped social hierarchy.
- Public policy reflects the values and preferences of the elite.

FIGURE 13.5 Pluralist and Elite Models

Source: Created by the author.

full consideration by those in the elite group. According to this approach, power is highly concentrated at the top of a pyramid-shaped social hierarchy, and public policy reflects the values and preferences of the elite, not the preferences of the people.

C. Wright Mills and the Power Elite Who makes up the U.S. power elite? According to sociologist C. Wright Mills (1959a), the *power elite* comprises leaders at the top of business, the executive branch of the federal government, and the military. Of these three, Mills speculated that the “corporate rich” (the highest-paid officers of the biggest corporations) are the most powerful because of their unique ability to parlay the vast economic resources at their disposal into political power. At the middle level of the pyramid, Mills placed the legislative branch of government, special interest groups, and local opinion leaders. The bottom (and widest) layer of the pyramid is occupied by the unorganized masses, who are relatively powerless and are vulnerable to economic and political exploitation.

G. William Domhoff and the Ruling Class Sociologist G. William Domhoff (2002) asserts that, in fact, this nation has a *ruling class*—the corporate rich, who make up less than 1 percent of the U.S. population. Domhoff uses the term *ruling class* to signify a relatively fixed group of privileged people who wield power sufficient to constrain political processes and serve underlying capitalist interests.

Although the power elite controls the everyday operation of the political system, who *governs* is less important than who *rules*.

According to Domhoff (2005), the upper class and the corporate rich influence politics in the following ways:

- “The rich” coalesce into a social upper class that has developed institutions by which the children of its members are socialized into an upper-class worldview and newly wealthy people are assimilated.
- Members of this upper class control corporations, which have been the primary mechanisms for generating and holding wealth in the United States for upwards of 150 years now.
- In a network of nonprofit organizations, members of the upper class and hired corporate leaders not yet in the upper class shape policy debates.
- Members of the upper class, with the help of their high-level employees in for-profit and nonprofit institutions, are able to dominate the federal government.

elite model

an analysis of political systems that views power in political systems as being concentrated in the hands of a small group of elites, and the masses are relatively powerless.

- The rich, and corporate leaders, nonetheless claim to be relatively powerless.
- Working people have less power than in many other democratic countries, so they have little chance to influence the political process.

However, Domhoff emphasizes that people in the United States do have options because of their rights to free speech and to vote. Although the U.S. government may not always be responsive to the will of the majority of voters, citizens have been able to place restraints on some actions of wealthy elites to keep them from having an even greater influence on policy than they already possess.

Power elite models call our attention to a central concern in contemporary U.S. society: the ability of democracy and its ideals to survive in the context of the increasingly concentrated power held by capitalist oligarchies such as the media giants that we discuss in this chapter.

The U.S. Political System

The U.S. political system is made up of formal elements, such as the legislative process and the duties of the president, and informal elements, such as the role of political parties in the election process. We now turn to an examination of these informal elements, including political parties, political socialization, and voter participation.

Political Parties and Elections

A **political party** is an organization whose purpose is to gain and hold legitimate control of government; it is usually composed of people with similar attitudes, interests, and socioeconomic status. A political party (1) develops and articulates policy positions, (2) educates voters about issues and simplifies the choices for them, and (3) recruits candidates who agree with those policies, helps those candidates win office, and holds the candidates responsible for implementing the party's policy positions. In carrying out these functions, a party may try to modify the demands of special interests, build a consensus that could win majority support, and provide simple and identifiable choices for voters on election day. Political parties create a *platform*, a formal statement of the party's political positions on various social and economic issues.

Since the Civil War, the Democratic and Republican parties have dominated the U.S. political system (see ■ Figure 13.6). Although one party may control the presidency for several terms, at some point the voters elect the other party's nominee, and control shifts.

How well do the parties measure up to the ideal-type characteristics of a political party? Although both parties have been successful in getting their candidates elected at various times, they generally do not meet the ideal characteristics for a political party because they do not offer

voters clear policy alternatives. Moreover, the two parties are oligarchies, dominated by active elites who hold views that are further from the center of the political spectrum than are those of a majority of members of their party. As a result, voters in primary elections (in which the nominees of political parties for most offices other than president and vice president are chosen) may select nominees whose views are closer to the center of the political spectrum and further away from the party's own platform. Likewise, party loyalties appear to be declining among voters, who may vote in one party's primary but then cast their ballot in general elections without total loyalty to that party or cast a "split-ticket" ballot (voting for one party's candidate in one race and another party's candidate in the next one).

Finally, mainstream and social media have replaced the party as a means of political communication. Often, the candidate who wins does so as a result of media presentation, not the political party's platform. Candidates no longer need political parties to carry their message to the people.

Discontent with the Current Political System and Parties

Although many individuals identify themselves as either Republicans or Democrats, a growing number of people have expressed discontent with the political parties that have dominated the Washington political system for many years. Nonstop fighting between Republicans and Democrats has left many Americans feeling "like the children of two permanently divorcing parents," in the words of *New York Times* columnist Thomas L. Friedman (2016). The political gridlock grew following the 2008 presidential election and its aftermath when Republicans vowed to obstruct President Obama's legislative initiatives and make him a "one-term president" (Friedman, 2016). Although President Obama was reelected in 2012, the impasse was further intensified when the Republican Party took control of the House of Representatives and the Senate in 2014, giving that party control of Congress. President Barack Obama sought to sidestep this impasse through executive measures to keep his health care legislation alive and to move immigration reform forward. In the meantime, the Republican-controlled Congress sought to reduce Social Security and Medicare benefits, dismantle funding for the Affordable Care Act, and cut other health initiatives related to women's health and family-planning issues.

All the while, discontent among voters continued to grow, reaching an all-time high during the 2015–2016 presidential election cycle, in which many voters expressed their discontent about how "business-as-usual" in Washington was hurting the average American's pocketbook and creating even greater economic inequality. In response to the 2016 presidential debates, many voters who identified as Democrats, Republicans, and independents denounced some candidates for their incivility, including demonizing immigrants, Muslims, women, the wealthy, Wall Street, the poor, and others who were identified as being part of the

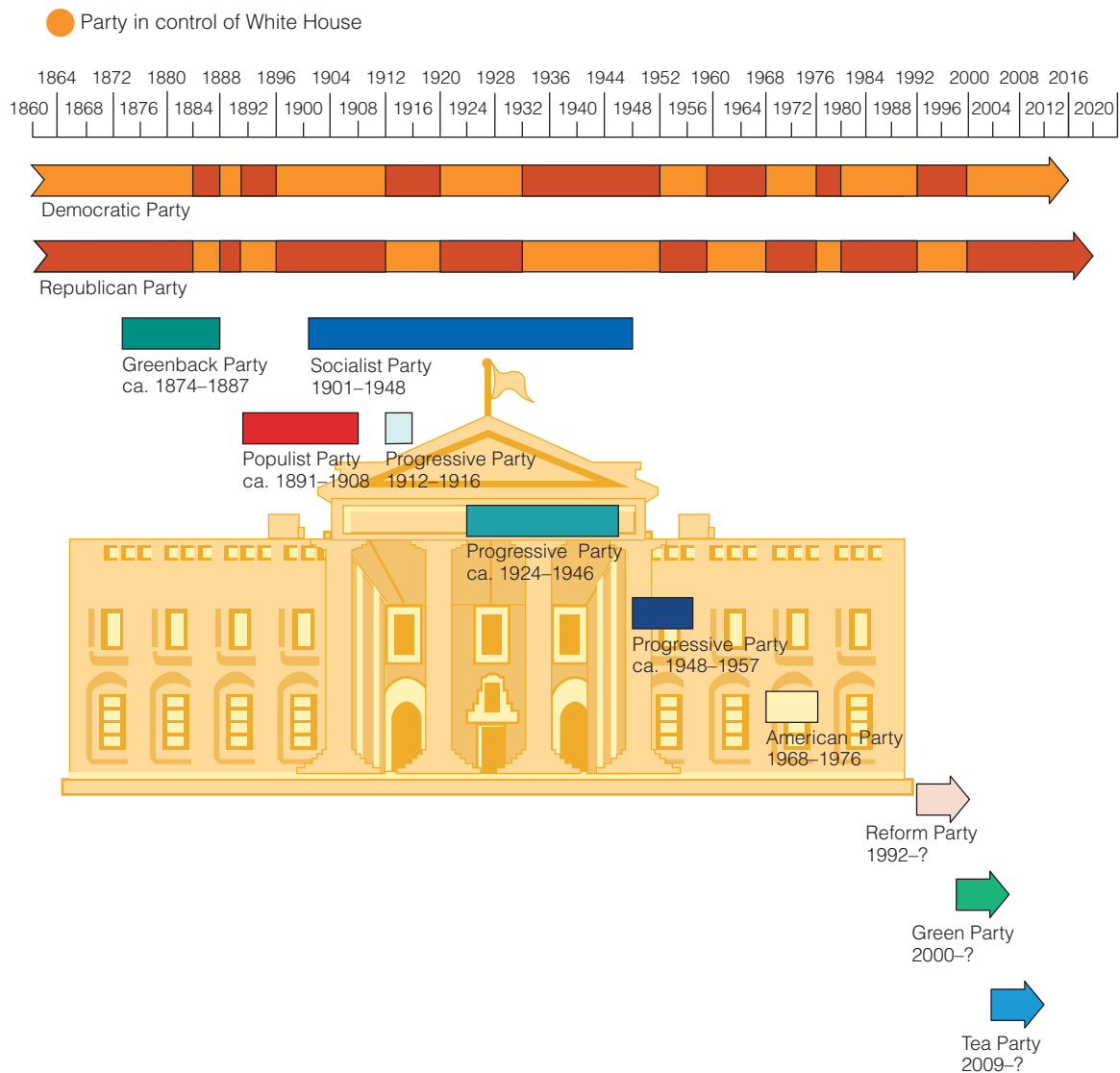


FIGURE 13.6 Major U.S. Political Parties
 Despite recurring attempts by other groups to organize third parties, the Democratic and Republican parties have dominated national politics in the United States. Control of the presidency has alternated between these two parties since the Civil War.
 Note: Three different “third parties” have gone by the name Progressive Party.
 Source: Created by the author.

nation’s problems. When politicians and candidates for office took controversial stands on certain issues, they were often confronted with angry Tweets and Facebook posts denouncing them in harsh terms. There was also anger and deep-seated malcontent among people who believed that the middle class is dying, that jobs lost would never be restored, and children would never have an opportunity to get ahead.

The 2016 election of President Donald Trump brought about one of the most controversial eras in modern politics. Even before Trump officially took office, controversies about how he was elected emerged, including if there was Russian interference in the campaign to guarantee his election. In the following years, a wide variety of other disputes emerged or grew worse, creating a tremendous

divide between Republican and Democrat members of Congress, officials in his administration and the larger Washington federal bureaucracy, and a continuous parade of other persons who ended up in the media and sometimes in prison as a result of their actions regarding Trump and his business, personal, or political affairs. As of the beginning of 2020, the Trump administration had rolled back many environmental protections, withdrawn from the Paris Agreement about climate change, tried to

political party

an organization whose purpose is to gain and hold legitimate control of government.

repeal the Affordable Care Act, and, when unable to do that, had tried to dismantle as much of the law as possible through executive orders and other means. Among the most controversial of the Trump administration demands was for federal funding of a border wall between the United States and Mexico and enhanced enforcement by immigration officials to close the southern border of this country and to incarcerate people, including women and children, who sought illegal entry into the United States. In September 2019, an impeachment inquiry was started by the House of Representatives after a report was issued that stated President Trump had abused his presidential power by pressuring the president of another nation to conduct an investigation in one of Trump's possible opponents in the 2020 presidential race. This investigation resulted in the impeachment of Trump by the House of Representatives in late 2019. This investigation resulted in the impeachment of Trump by the House of Representatives in late 2019. However, in early 2020, the Senate acquitted him on both impeachment articles. Consequently, the impeachment would stand, but no further official discussion was held by the U.S. Congress about removing him from office. For newer information about other conflicts and accomplishments of the Trump administration, please conduct an online search.

In the section on the economy, we look more closely at this pessimism about the political process and the direction the United States seems to be going. These reasons include the fact that American families have not had a real increase in earnings over the past twenty years, particularly when their current income is adjusted for inflation during that time period. A second factor is that individuals without college degrees are faring less well in the economy than they have in the past. Those without a high school diploma are more often finding themselves in the ranks of the long-term unemployed or among those holding down two or more part-time jobs but still finding they are unable to make ends meet. Third, white men have left or been pushed out of the job market to the extent that their overall participation rate has gone down for six decades. Fourth, national income inequality has continued to grow worse with each passing year. Issues such as these further alienated many people from the "establishment" political system and traditional political parties because it was believed that existing leaders had not done their jobs: They had not adequately addressed many pressing social problems faced by the nation, and candidates running for office had given little hope that they might be able to do anything significant to resolve these problems in the future. We look at some of these issues in more depth later in this chapter.

Perhaps this discussion about the length and depth of discontent with the status quo in politics, the government, and political parties helps us to understand how the presidential election of 2016 had Donald J. Trump (Republican) and Hillary R. Clinton (Democrat) as its main candidates (■ Figure 13.7). By the 2020 election, Democrats were having a difficult time narrowing down a long list of



Spencer Platt/Getty Images



T. J. Kirkpatrick/Bloomberg/Getty Images

FIGURE 13.7 One of the most heated races for the U.S. presidency occurred in 2016, when Republican nominee Donald J. Trump and Democratic nominee Hillary Rodham Clinton aggressively sparred with each other throughout the entire election process.

contenders for their presidential candidate, and the general public seemed politically polarized and sharply divided over specific issues over which they were unwilling to compromise.

According to a summary by the Pew Research Center U.S. Politics & Policy (2019):

Partisanship continues to be *the* dividing line in the American public's political attitudes, far surpassing differences by age, race and ethnicity, gender, educational attainment, religious affiliation or other factors. Yet there are substantial divisions within both parties on fundamental political values, views of current issues and the severity of the problems facing the nation.

Where does this leave us? No one knows for sure. However, elections in the third decade of the twenty-first century may have higher rates of political participation and less voter apathy than in previous years if more people realize the seriousness of these divisions in this nation. Let's look at some of the factors associated with what people think about key social and political issues and why people do, or do not, vote.

Political Participation and Voter Apathy

Why do some people vote and others not? How do people come to think of themselves as being conservative, moderate, or liberal? Key factors include individuals' political socialization, attitudes, and their overall views of how effective the government and their political leaders are at any given point in time. Part of this has to do with how individuals have been socialized to think about the government and its political leadership.

Political socialization is the process by which people learn political attitudes, values, and behavior. For young children the family is the primary agent of political socialization, and children tend to learn and hold many of the same opinions held by their parents. By the time children reach school age, they typically identify with the political party (if any) of their parents. As we grow older, other agents of socialization begin to affect our political beliefs, including our peers, teachers, and all forms of media. If we grow up around family members and friends who vote and discuss politics, we are more likely to be interested in the political process and to vote.

In addition to the socialization process, people's socioeconomic status affects their political attitudes, values, and beliefs. For example, individuals who are very poor or are unable to find employment may believe that society has failed them and therefore tend to be indifferent toward the political system. Believing that casting a ballot would make no difference to their circumstances, they do not vote.

Democracy in the United States has been defined as a government "of the people, by the people, and for the people." Accordingly, it would stand to reason that "the people" would actively participate in their government at any or all of four levels: (1) voting, (2) attending and taking part in political meetings, (3) actively participating in political campaigns, and (4) running for and/or holding political office.

Voter Turnout and Political Preferences Although voting is considered to be crucial to maintaining a democracy and to be one of the privileges of being a U.S. citizen, the turnout of eligible voters in the cast ballots in elections is often surprisingly low. Voter turnout typically is somewhat higher in the years when presidential elections are held as compared to years when congressional seats are the highest offices decided (File, 2018). In the 2016 presidential election, for example, voter turnout was at a twenty-year low (55 percent) for all registered voting-age citizens. This followed an all-time high of 64 percent of all eligible voters in the 2008 election, the year when Barack Obama and Joe Biden on the Democratic ticket defeated John McCain and Sarah Palin on the Republican ticket (Wallace, 2016).

Age and sex are important characteristics in voter turnout. Among the 27.4 million registered voters between the ages of eighteen and twenty-nine in 2016, only 21.6 million (15.7 percent) actually cast ballots. The age category with the highest percent of persons who cast

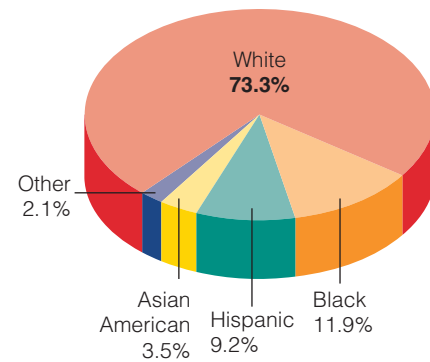


FIGURE 13.8 Voter Participation in the 2016 Presidential Election by Race and Ethnicity

Source: Based on Pew Research Center, 2017.

ballots in 2016 was the 45–64 age group (37.6 percent of eligible voters), followed by those age sixty-five and older (24.2 percent). Voter participation in 2016 also varied by sex: 53.6 percent of eligible female voters cast ballots as compared with 46.4 percent of males.

Race and Hispanic origin are interesting characteristics in voter turnout. ■ Figure 13.8 shows the percentage of voter participation by race and ethnicity in the 2016 presidential election. Among white (non-Hispanic) eligible voters, 100.8 million (73.3 percent) cast ballots. Among African American (black) eligible voters, 15.3 million (11.9 percent) voted in the 2016 election, down in number from the years when Barack Obama was on the Democratic ticket for office. Hispanic/Latinx (any race) accounted for nearly 12.7 million voters (9.2 percent); Asian American alone made up nearly 4.9 million voters (3.6 percent); and other race (non-Hispanic) comprised slightly less than 12.7 million voters (2.0 percent) (File, 2018). Over the period of time from 1980 until 2012, the share of voters who were white (non-Hispanic) decreased from one presidential election to the next while the distribution of voters who were nonwhite or Hispanic increased in most elections. In 2016 this percentage did not show a significant change from 2014. For example, 87.6 percent of all voters were white (non-Hispanic) in the 1980 election, as compared to 73.7 percent in 2012 and 73.3 percent in the 2016 election (File, 2018).

Finally, educational attainment levels for American voters have increased during recent election cycles. About 60 percent of voters had a high school education or less in 1980; however, by 2016, the proportion of voters with a high school education or less had dropped to slightly less than 30 percent. During this same time period, a corresponding increase occurred in the percentage of voters who had either earned some college credits or an associate's (two-year) degree or who had a bachelor's degree or more.

political socialization

the process by which people learn political attitudes, values, and behavior.

The percentage of voters who had achieved a bachelor's degree or more had increased from 20.6 percent in 1980 to 39.6 percent in 2016 (File, 2018).

Voter Turnout in Swing (“Battleground”) States In presidential elections, we frequently hear about “swing states” or “battleground states.” What do these terms mean? Swing state (or battleground state) refers to any state that could reasonably be won by either the Democratic or Republican presidential candidate by a swing in votes. They are also known as battleground states because they are the locations targeted by both major political party campaigns for spending the most dollars and time trying to gain the votes of the largest number of voters. Concern about the outcome in swing or battleground states is based on the need for a candidate to win in the electoral college in order to win the election. When no single candidate or political party appears to have overwhelming support in securing the state's electoral college votes, these states are viewed as crucial to the success of a given candidate. For example, in the 2018 presidential election, Democratic candidate Hillary Clinton won the overall popular vote nationwide with more than 62.5 million votes cast in her favor, as compared to Republican candidate Donald Trump's more than 61.2 million votes, but Trump won the electoral college vote to become President of the United States. How could this happen? Trump won states that were worth more electoral votes than states won by Hillary Clinton. In other words, Trump won about 70 percent of the electoral votes available in battleground states. Trump's battleground states were Arizona, Iowa, Michigan, Wisconsin, Ohio, Pennsylvania, North Carolina, and Florida. Clinton's were Colorado, Nevada, New Hampshire, and Virginia. Crucial to Trump's victory were Wisconsin, Michigan, and Pennsylvania.

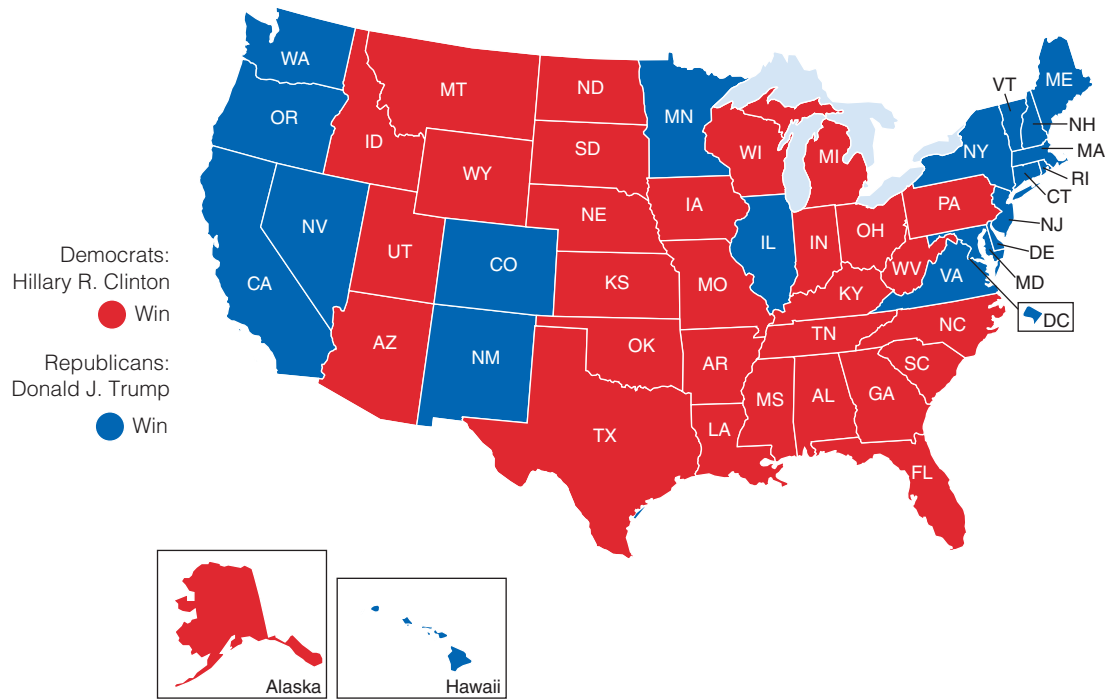
Although extensive discussions are had about the strengths and weaknesses of the electoral college system, the basic fact remains that it is based on a winner-take-all design that gives more weight to battleground states. In the 2016 presidential election, Trump had an advantage in those states because a higher percentage of voters in those states typically are white, have fewer years of formal education, and were comprised of fewer Hispanic voters than the country as a whole (Cohn, 2016). Does the electoral college favor rural areas with lower population density over larger cities? Is it a disservice to voters in states that hear very little from political candidates because these candidates believe that they must work the hardest to build a base in areas where they are able to get the most electoral college votes? By contrast, people who are opposed to this method of choosing a president argue that the direct popular vote should be the winning factor in elections because letting swing (battleground) states determine the outcome of such important elections is undemocratic.

Red and Blue States State-by-state differences in voting preferences are also highly visible in what political analysts refer to as the “red states” and the “blue states.”

Since the 2000 presidential election, these terms have been used to refer to those states whose residents predominantly vote for Republican Party (red) or Democratic Party (blue) presidential candidates (see ■ Figure 13.9 for a state-by-state breakdown of the 2016 presidential election). The term is also used to differentiate between states being perceived as conservative or liberal, but this does not really hold true because many liberals may be found in so-called conservative states while many conservatives may reside in so-called liberal states. For those states with both liberal and conservative voters, the term “purple” is sometimes used instead. Color-coded electoral maps became especially popular after television reporters began using them to describe to viewers what was happening to votes on election night. Some analysts believe that the notion of red states and blue states would not have persisted as long as it has if not for the winner-take-all system used by most states in the electoral college and by the constant use of these maps by television and eventually by social media outlets.

Voter Apathy or Something Else? Why is it that so many eligible voters in this country stay away from the polls? During any election, millions of voting-age persons do not go to the polls because of illness, disability, lack of transportation, lack of registration, or absenteeism. However, these explanations do not account for why many other people do not vote. According to some analysts, people may not vote because they are satisfied with the status quo. Other analysts suggest that many potential voters are apathetic and uninformed—they lack an understanding of both public issues and the basic processes of government. And still other commentators argue that people stay away from the polls because they feel alienated from politics because of political corruption and influence-peddling by special interests, large corporations, and the power of super-PACs. As previously discussed, participation in politics is influenced by gender, age, race/ethnicity, and, especially, socioeconomic status (SES). One explanation for the higher rates of political participation at higher SES levels is that advanced levels of education may give people a better understanding of government processes, a belief that they have more at stake in the political process, and greater economic resources to contribute to the process. Some studies suggest that during their college years, many people develop assumptions about political participation that continue throughout their lives.

Much remains to be learned about voter participation and voter apathy. With increasingly sophisticated techniques for studying who goes (or does not go) to the polls and who remains apathetic about the political process, we will be able to know much more in the future about why the United States has some of the lowest voter turnout rates of any democracy worldwide. At the time of this writing in early 2020, it is impossible to predict the turnout for the 2020 presidential election. You may wish to conduct an online search to learn more about how



Donald J. Trump (R) 306 electoral votes; 61,201,031 popular votes

Hillary R. Clinton (D) 232 electoral votes; 62,523,126 popular votes

FIGURE 13.9 2016 Presidential Election: State by State

the issues discussed in this chapter have affected voter turnout and decision making in the 2020 presidential election.

Governmental Bureaucracy

When most people think of political power, they overlook one of its major sources—the governmental bureaucracy. Negative feelings about bureaucracy are perhaps strongest when people are describing the “faceless bureaucrats” and “red tape” with which they must deal in government. But who are these “faceless bureaucrats,” and what do they do?

Bureaucratic power tends to take on a life of its own. During the nineteenth century, the government had a relatively limited role in everyday life. In the 1930s, however, the scope of government was extended greatly during the Great Depression to deal with labor–management relations, public welfare, and the regulation of the securities markets. With dramatic increases in technology and increasing demands from the public that the government “do something” about the many problems facing the United States, such as fighting terrorism and providing homeland security, the government has continued to grow in some areas in recent decades. However, the overall size of the federal civilian workforce relative to the country’s population has declined dramatically over the past several

decades. Today, the federal bureaucracy employs more than 2.1 million people in nonpostal civilian positions, about 1.4 million active-duty service members, and one million military reserve personnel throughout the United States and the world. In addition, approximately 500,000 workers are employed in the postal workforce. About 85 percent of federal employees (1.7 million people) live and work outside of the Washington, D.C., metropolitan area (whitehouse.gov, 2019c).

Because much of the actual functioning of the government is carried on by its bureaucracy, even the president, the White House staff, and cabinet officials have difficulty establishing control over the bureaucracy. Many employees in the Washington federal bureaucracy have seen several presidents come and go, but the *permanent government*, made up of top-tier civil service bureaucrats who have a major power base, has remained more constant.

■ Figure 13.10 shows characteristics of the “typical” federal civilian employee. The longevity of some of these employees is reflected in the fact that almost one-third (606,000) of the federal workforce is older than age fifty-five, while only eight percent (173,000) are younger than age thirty (whitehouse.gov, 2019c).

The governmental bureaucracy has been able to perpetuate itself and expand because many of its employees have highly specialized knowledge and skills and cannot be easily replaced by “outsiders.” In addition, as the United

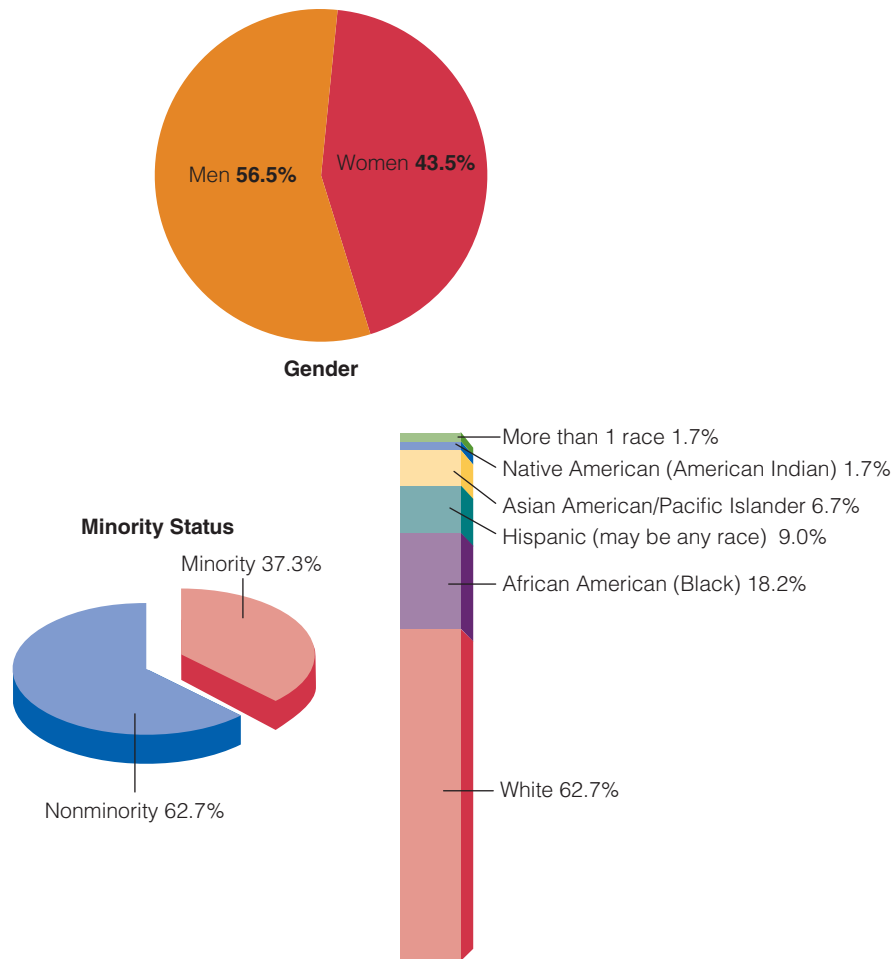


FIGURE 13.10 The “Typical” Federal Civilian Employee, 2018
Source: whitehouse.gov, 2019c.

States has grown in size and complexity, public policy is increasingly made by bureaucrats rather than by elected officials. For example, offices and agencies have been established to create rules, policies, and procedures for dealing with complex issues such as nuclear power, environmental protection, and drug safety; bureaucracies announce an estimated twenty rules or regulations for every one law passed by Congress.

Since the federal civilian workforce represents an annual taxpayer investment of about \$300 billion, the Trump administration has been committed to realigning this workforce so that it better meets the needs of the American people. As this statement reflects, the federal budget is the central ingredient in the bureaucracy. Preparing the annual federal budget is a major undertaking for the president and the Office of Management and Budget, one of the most important agencies in Washington. Getting the budget approved by Congress is an even more monumental task; however, even with the highly publicized wrangling over the budget by the president and Congress, the final congressional appropriations are usually within 2–3 percent of the budget originally proposed by the president.

In part, this is caused by the *iron triangle of power*—a three-way arrangement in which a private interest group (usually a corporation), a congressional committee or subcommittee, and a bureaucratic agency make the final decision on a political issue that is to be decided by that agency. ■ Figure 13.11 illustrates the alliance among the Defense Department (Pentagon), private military (or defense) contractors, and members of Congress. This iron triangle involves a revolving door of money, influence, and jobs among these three sets of actors. For example, military contractors who receive contracts from the Defense Department serve on the advisory committees that recommend what weapons they believe are needed. Over time, many personnel move from one position to another on the triangle, such as serving in the military, moving to the Defense Department, and ultimately ending up in high-paid, prestigious positions in military industries.

The iron triangle is also referred to as the *military-industrial complex*—the mutual interdependence of the military establishment and private military contractors. According to classical sociologist C. Wright Mills (1976), this alliance of economic, military, and political power amounts to a “permanent war economy” or “military

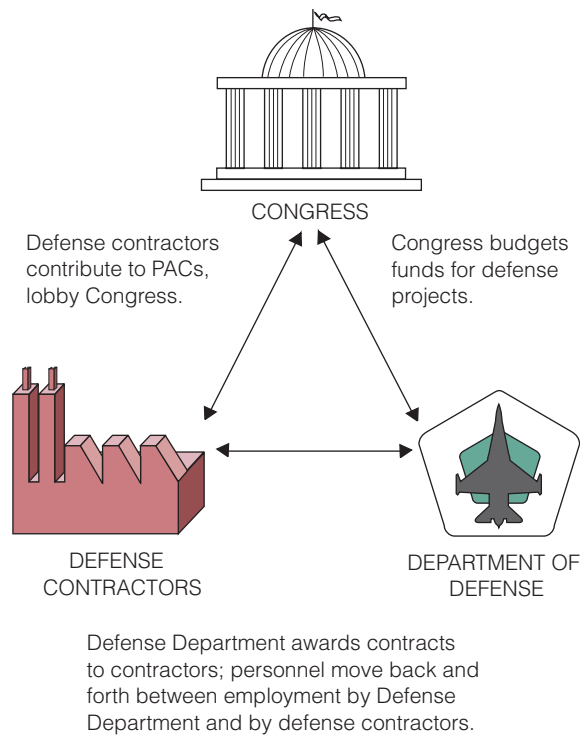


FIGURE 13.11 Example of the Iron Triangle of Power

economy.” However, economist John Kenneth Galbraith (1985) argued that the threat of war is good for the economy because government money spent on military preparedness stimulates the private sector of the economy, creates jobs, and encourages consumer spending. Issues regarding the military-industrial complex are intricately linked to problems in the economy, which we now examine.

Economic Systems in Global Perspective

The **economy** is the social institution that ensures the maintenance of society through the production, distribution, and consumption of goods and services. *Goods* are tangible objects that are necessary (such as food, clothing, and shelter) or desired (such as smart speakers like Google Home, Alexa, and Amazon Echo, or iRobot vacuums and mops that clean your home or office for you). *Services* are intangible activities for which people are willing to pay (such as dry cleaning, a movie, or medical care).

Preindustrial, Industrial, and Postindustrial Economies

In all societies the specific method of producing goods is related to the technoeconomic base of the society, as discussed in Chapter 10. In each society people develop an economic system, ranging from simple to very complex, for the sake of survival.

Preindustrial economies include hunting-and-gathering, horticultural and pastoral, and agrarian societies. Most workers engage in **primary-sector production**—the extraction of raw materials and natural resources from the environment. These materials and resources are typically consumed or used without much processing. The production units in hunting-and-gathering societies are small; most goods are produced by family members. The division of labor is by age and by gender. The potential for producing surplus goods increases as people learn to domesticate animals and grow their own food. In horticultural and pastoral societies, the economy becomes distinct from family life. The distribution process becomes more complex, with the accumulation of a surplus such that some people can engage in activities other than food production. In agrarian societies, production is related primarily to producing food. However, workers have a greater variety of specialized tasks, such as warlord or priest; for example, warriors are necessary to protect the surplus goods from plunder by outsiders.

Industrial economies result from sweeping changes to the system of production and distribution of goods and services during industrialization. Drawing on new forms of energy (such as steam, gasoline, and electricity) and machine technology, factories proliferate as the primary means of producing goods. Most workers engage in **secondary-sector production**—the processing of raw materials (from the primary sector) into finished goods. For example, steel workers process metal ore; auto workers then convert the ore into automobiles, trucks, and buses. In industrial economies, work becomes specialized and repetitive, activities become bureaucratically organized, and workers primarily work with machines instead of with one another. With the emergence of mass production, larger surpluses are generated, typically benefiting some people and organizations but not others.

In sum, the typical characteristics of industrial economies include the following:

1. New forms of energy, mechanization, and the growth of the factory system
2. Increased division of labor and specialization among workers

military-industrial complex

the mutual interdependence of the military establishment and private military contractors.

economy

the social institution that ensures the maintenance of society through the production, distribution, and consumption of goods and services.

primary-sector production

the sector of the economy that extracts raw materials and natural resources from the environment.

secondary-sector production

the sector of the economy that processes raw materials (from the primary sector) into finished goods.

3. Universal application of scientific methods to problem solving and profit making
4. Introduction of wage labor, time discipline, and workers' deferred gratification, which means that employees should be diligent at work and pursue personal activities on their own time only
5. Strengthening of bureaucratic organizational structure and the enforcement of rules, policies, and procedures to make the workplace more efficient and profitable

All these characteristics contribute to the development of industrial economies, greater productivity in the workplace, and a dramatic increase in consumption because many more goods are available at affordable prices.

A *postindustrial economy* is based on *tertiary-sector production*—the provision of services rather than goods—as a primary source of livelihood for workers and profit for owners and corporate shareholders. Tertiary-sector production includes a wide range of activities, such as fast-food service, transportation, communication, education, real estate, advertising, sports, and entertainment. Google, Uber, and home-food-delivery services are examples of postindustrial corporations that primarily provide services rather than selling products (■ Figure 13.12).

Five characteristics are central to the postindustrial economy:

1. Service industries dominate over manufacturing.
2. Information and technological innovation displace property as the central preoccupations in the economy.

3. Professional and technical classes grow more predominant, and workplace culture shifts from factories to diversified work settings.
4. Traditional boundaries between work and home (public and private life) no longer exist because digital technologies such as cellphones and computers make global communication possible.
5. High levels of urbanization and a decline in population occur in many rural areas.

Capitalism and socialism are the principal economic models in industrial and postindustrial countries. As we examine these two models, keep in mind that no society has a purely capitalist or socialist economy.

Capitalism

Capitalism is an economic system characterized by private ownership of the means of production, from which personal profits can be derived through market competition and without government intervention. Most of us think of ourselves as “owners” of private property because we own a car, a television, or other possessions. However, most of us are not capitalists; we *spend money* on the things we own rather than *make money* from them. Only a relatively few people own income-producing property from which a profit can be realized by producing and distributing goods and services; everyone else is a consumer. “Ideal” capitalism has four distinctive features: (1) private ownership of the means of production, (2) pursuit of personal profit, (3) competition, and (4) lack of government intervention.

Private Ownership of the Means of Production

Capitalist economies are based on the right of individuals to own income-producing property, such as land, water, mines, and factories, and the right to “buy” people’s labor. However, under early monopoly capitalism (1890–1940), most ownership shifted from individuals to huge *corporations*—organizations that have legal powers, such as the ability to enter into contracts and buy and sell property, separate from their individual owners. In advanced monopoly capitalism (1940–present), ownership and control of major industrial and business sectors have become increasingly concentrated, and many corporations have become more global in scope. *Transnational corporations* are large corporations that are headquartered in one country but sell and produce goods and services in many countries. These corporations play a major role in the economies and governments of many nations.



Michael Short/Bloomberg/Getty Images

FIGURE 13.12 Google headquarters with its green Android robot (holding a marshmallow to signify one of their software products) is representative of the postindustrial economy in which information and technological innovation are central preoccupations of the economy.

Market capitalization for some of the top public companies worldwide is shown in ■ Table 13.1. Market capitalization measures what a company is worth on the open market, as well as the market's perception of its future prospects, because it reflects what investors are willing to pay for its stock (Fidelity, 2019).

Pursuit of Personal Profit A tenet of capitalism is the belief that people are free to maximize their individual gain through personal profit; in the process, the entire society will benefit from their activities (Smith, 1976/1776). Economic development is assumed to benefit both capitalists and workers, and the general public also benefits from public expenditures (such as for roads, schools, and parks) made possible through an increase in business tax revenues.

During the period of industrial capitalism, however, specific individuals and families (not the general public) were the primary recipients of profits. For many generations, descendants of some of the early industrial capitalists have benefited from the economic deeds (and misdeeds) of their ancestors. In early monopoly capitalism, some stockholders derived massive profits from companies that held near-monopolies on specific goods and services.

TABLE 13.1 *Forbes* List of the World's 15 Largest Public Companies based on Market Capitalization

Company and Location	Market capitalization*
Industrial and Commercial Bank—China	\$305.1 billion
JP Morgan Chase Bank—U.S.	\$368.5 billion
China Construction Company—China	\$224.99 billion
Agricultural Bank of China—China	\$197.05 billion
Bank of America—U.S.	\$287.34 billion
Apple—U.S.	\$961.26 billion
Ping An Insurance Group—China	\$220.2 billion
Bank of China—China	\$142.96 billion
Royal Dutch Shell—Netherlands	\$264.94 billion
Wells Fargo—U.S.	\$214.68 billion
Exxon Mobil—U.S.	\$343.43 billion
AT&T—U.S.	\$233.33 billion
Samsung Electronics—South Korea	\$272.42 billion
Citigroup—U.S.	\$161.11 billion
Toyota Motor—Japan	\$176.6 billion

*Market capitalization (also known as "market cap") is the market value of a publicly traded company's outstanding shares.

Source: forbes.com 2019; author's calculations

In advanced (late) monopoly capitalism, profits have become even more concentrated. Although some people own *some* stock, they do not own *control*; in other words, they are unable to participate in establishing the policies that determine the size of the profit or the rate of return on investments (which affects the profits they derive).

Competition In theory, competition acts as a balance to excessive profits. When producers vie with one another for customers, they must be able to offer innovative goods and services at competitive prices. However, from the time of early industrial capitalism, the trend has been toward less, rather than more, competition among companies. In early monopoly capitalism, competition was diminished by increasing concentration *within* a particular industry, a classic case being the virtual monopoly on oil held by John D. Rockefeller's Standard Oil Company (Lundberg, 1988; Tarbell, 1925/1904). At the beginning of the twenty-first century, Microsoft Corporation was the subject of federal investigations and lawsuits because it so dominated certain areas of the computer software industry that it virtually had no competitors. In other situations, just a few companies may dominate certain industries. An **oligopoly**, which in Greek means "few sellers," refers to an industry dominated by just a few companies. An example is the music industry, in which a few giant companies are behind many of the labels and artists (see ■ Table 13.2). In fact, what was formerly known as the Big Four—Universal, Sony, Warner, and EMI—further consolidated into the Big Three in 2011, leaving only Universal, Sony, and Warner. This situation represents a **shared monopoly**—when four or fewer companies supply 50 percent or more of a particular market. Estimates by *Rolling Stone* magazine in 2019 indicated that the Big Three labels, possessing a shared monopoly in the music industry, earned about \$19 million a day from streaming services alone. After multimillion-dollar declines occurred in sales of

tertiary-sector production

the sector of the economy that is involved in the provision of services rather than goods.

capitalism

an economic system characterized by private ownership of the means of production, from which personal profits can be derived through market competition and without government intervention.

corporations

organizations that have legal powers, such as the ability to enter into contracts and buy and sell property, separate from their individual owners.

transnational corporations

large corporations that are headquartered in one country but sell and produce goods and services in many countries.

oligopoly

an industry dominated by just a few companies.

shared monopoly

a situation that occurs when four or fewer companies supply 50 percent or more of a particular market.

TABLE 13.2 The Music Industry's Big Three

Company	Country	Leading Artists
Universal Music Group	France	Taylor Swift Lady Gaga Kanye West Ellie Goulding Fall Out Boy Imagine Dragon Drake Ariana Grande
Sony Music Entertainment	United States	Adele Calvin Harris Ricky Martin Shakira Mariah Carey Backstreet Boys Britney Spears Kelly Clarkson
Warner Music Group	United States	Red Hot Chili Peppers Ed Sheeran Jason Derulo Michael Buble Coldplay Madonna Katy Perry

CDs, cassettes, and vinyl records, streaming services created a new and important cash flow for these vast corporations (Wang, 2019). Other industries that are similarly dominated by only a few companies include manufactures of automobiles, breakfast cereals, cigarettes, oil, and personal computers, smartphones, and tablets. However, as we have seen in recent years, even corporations, such as automobile manufacturers, that have been described as “too big to fail” have had economic problems serious enough that government bailouts were required to keep the companies in business and their workers on the payroll.

In advanced monopoly capitalism, mergers also occur *across* industries: Corporations gain near-monopoly control over all aspects of the production and distribution of a product by acquiring both the companies that supply the raw materials and the companies that are the outlets for the product. For example, an oil company may hold leases on the land where the oil is pumped out of the ground, own the plants that convert the oil into gasoline, and own the individual gasoline stations that sell the product to the public.

Corporations with control both within and across industries are often formed by a series of mergers and acquisitions. These corporations are referred to as *conglomerates*—combinations of businesses in different commercial areas, all of which are owned by one holding company. Media ownership is a case in point; companies such as Clear Channel Communications, Disney/21st Century Fox, AT&T/Warner Media, Charter Spectrum, and Comcast have extensive holdings in radio and television stations, cable television companies, and film production and distribution companies, to name only a few.

Competition is reduced over the long run by *interlocking corporate directorates*—members of the board of directors of one corporation who also sit on the board(s) of other corporations. Although the Clayton Antitrust Act of 1914 made it illegal for a person to sit simultaneously on the boards of directors of two corporations that are in *direct* competition with each other, a person may serve simultaneously on the board of a financial institution (a bank, for example) and the board of a commercial corporation (a computer manufacturing company or a furniture store chain, for example) that borrows money from the bank. Directors of competing corporations may also serve together on the board of a third corporation that is not in direct competition with the other two. An example of interlocking directorates is depicted in ■ Figure 13.13. Compensation for members of the boards of top corporations are often much more than \$1 million per year when stock, stock options, and pensions are taken into account.

Interlocking directorates diminish competition by producing interdependence. Individuals who serve on multiple boards are often able to forge cooperative arrangements that benefit their corporations but not necessarily the general public. When several corporations are controlled by the same financial interests, they are more likely to cooperate with one another than to compete.

Lack of Government Intervention Ideally, capitalism works best without government intervention in the marketplace. The policy of *laissez-faire* (lez-ay-FARE, which means “leave alone”) was advocated by economist Adam Smith in his 1776 treatise *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*. Smith (1976/1776) argued

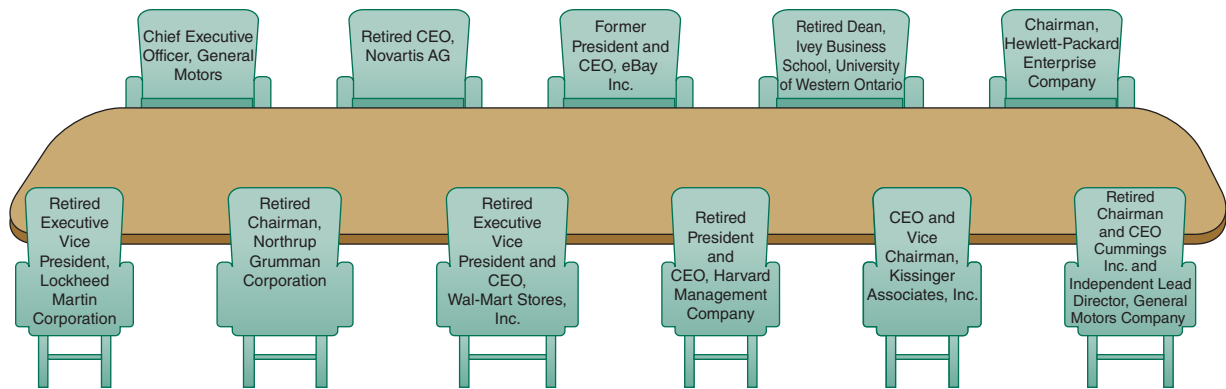


FIGURE 13.13 The General Motors Board of Directors

The 2019 General Motors Board of Directors shows the nature of interlocking directorates. On the chair representing each of the directors is the name of another entity the director has been connected with and his or her position within that entity. For the first time in the history of General Motors, women will constitute the majority of members on the corporation's Board of Directors.

Source: General Motors, 2019.

that when people pursue their own selfish interests, they are guided “as if by an invisible hand” to promote the best interests of society. Today, terms such as *market economy* and *free enterprise* are often used, but the underlying assumption is the same: Free market competition, not the government, should regulate prices and wages. However, the “ideal” of unregulated markets benefiting all citizens has seldom been realized. Individuals and companies in pursuit of higher profits have run roughshod over weaker competitors, and small businesses have grown into large, monopolistic corporations. Accordingly, government regulations were implemented in an effort to curb the excesses of the marketplace brought about by laissez-faire policies.

However, much of what is referred to as government intervention has been in the form of aid to business. Between 1850 and 1900, corporations received government assistance in the form of public subsidies and protection from competition by tariffs, patents, and trademarks. Government intervention in the twenty-first century has included the Emergency Economic Stabilization Act, which created the \$700 billion Troubled Assets Relief Program (TARP). This program allowed the government to purchase failed bank assets that resulted primarily from the subprime mortgage crisis (in which people were encouraged to purchase homes that many of them could not afford). General Motors, Bank of America, and American International Group (AIG) were among the companies that received taxpayers' money from the TARP bailout. Overall, most corporations have gained much more than they have lost as a result of government involvement in the economy.

Socialism

Socialism is an economic system characterized by public ownership of the means of production, the pursuit of collective goals, and centralized decision making. Like “pure” capitalism, “pure” socialism does not exist. Karl Marx described socialism as a temporary stage en route to

an ideal communist society. Although the terms *socialism* and *communism* are associated with Marx and are often used interchangeably, they are not identical. Marx defined *communism* as an economic system characterized by common ownership of all economic resources. In the *Communist Manifesto* and *Das Kapital*, he predicted that the working class would become increasingly impoverished and alienated under capitalism. As a result, the workers would become aware of their own class interests, revolt against the capitalists, and overthrow the entire system. After the revolution, private property would be abolished and capital would be controlled by collectives of workers who would own the means of production. The government (previously used to further the interests of the capitalists) would no longer be necessary. People would contribute according to their abilities and receive according to their needs (Marx, 1967/1867; Marx and Engels, 1967/1848). “Ideal” socialism has three distinctive features: (1) public ownership of the means of production, (2) pursuit of collective goals, and (3) centralized decision making.

Public Ownership of the Means of Production In a truly socialist economy, the means of production are owned and controlled by a collectivity or the state, not by private individuals or corporations. For example, prior to the early 1990s the state owned all the natural resources and almost

conglomerates

a combination of businesses in different commercial areas, all of which are owned by one holding company.

interlocking corporate directorates

members of the board of directors of one corporation who also sit on the board(s) of other corporations.

socialism

an economic system characterized by public ownership of the means of production, the pursuit of collective goals, and centralized decision making.

all the capital in the Soviet Union. At least in theory, goods were produced to meet the needs of the people. Access to housing and medical care was considered to be a right.

The leaders of what was then called the Soviet Union and some eastern European nations decided to abandon government ownership and control of the means of production because the system was unresponsive to the needs of the marketplace and offered no incentive for increased efficiency. Since the 1990s, Russia and other states in the former Soviet Union have attempted to privatize ownership of production. Economic reforms in the 1990s privatized most industries, with the exceptions of the energy- and defense-related sectors. Today, the state-owned Russian oil company Rosneft makes billions of dollars annually from the sale of oil.

China—previously the world's other major communist economy—has privatized many state industries. In *privatization*, resources are converted from state ownership to private ownership; the government takes an active role in developing, recognizing, and protecting private property rights. Entering the third decade of the twenty-first century, China has a hybrid political economy made up of both capitalism and an autocratic form of Communist Party governance. Economic growth initially brought about an increase in annual urban income, life expectancy increased by more than six years, and the rate of illiteracy dropped significantly. With these improvements, it appeared likely that the combination of communism and a modified form of capitalism would remain in place for the foreseeable future. However, the economy in China began to slow down in the late 2010s, and the condition further deteriorated with a trade war initiated by the Trump administration in about 2017–2018. The impact of U.S. tariffs on the Chinese economy is difficult to determine, but some companies shifted their production out of China and moved their investments elsewhere (da Costa, 2019). As China experienced these economic changes, workers also became more concerned about finding and keeping jobs (see this chapter's "Sociology in Global Perspective" box).

Pursuit of Collective Goals Socialism is based on the pursuit of collective goals, rather than on personal profits. Equality in decision making replaces hierarchical relationships (such as between owners and workers or between political leaders and citizens). Everyone shares in the goods and services of society—especially necessities such as food, clothing, shelter, and medical care—based on need, not on ability to pay. In reality, in nations such as China, members of the Communist Party are able to obtain low-interest loans from state-owned and state-operated banks as long as they play by party rules. In sum, even though pursuit of collective goals is one of the ideals of socialism, few societies can or do pursue purely collective goals.

Centralized Decision Making Another tenet of socialism is centralized decision making. In theory, economic decisions are based on the needs of society; the government is responsible for aiding the production and distribution of

goods and services. Central planners set wages and prices to ensure that the production process works. When problems such as shortages and unemployment arise, they can be dealt with quickly and effectively by the central government.

Mixed Economies

As we have seen, no economy is truly capitalist or socialist; most economies are mixtures of both. A *mixed economy* combines elements of a market economy (capitalism) with elements of a command economy (socialism). Sweden, Great Britain, and France have mixed economies, sometimes referred to as *democratic socialism*—an economic and political system that combines private ownership of some of the means of production, governmental distribution of some essential goods and services, and free elections. For example, government ownership in Sweden is limited primarily to railroads, mineral resources, a public bank, and liquor and tobacco operations. Compared with capitalist economies, however, the government in a mixed economy plays a larger role in setting rules, policies, and objectives (■ Figure 13.14).



Jeremy Nicholl/Alamy Stock Photo

FIGURE 13.14 For many decades, Russia had a state-controlled economy. However, beginning in the 1990s the government privatized many sectors of the economy and new companies made vast profits in sectors such as oil exploration. Here, workers in Siberia are setting pipe for the Yukos Oil Company.

SOCIOLOGY in **Global Perspective**

China's Economic Slowdown and the Fate of Factory and Office Workers

Shenzhen Job Fair Poster: "A \$150,000-a-year salary isn't just a dream."

Another Poster at the Fair: "Hope you find a good job soon."

Job Candidate: "Job hunting now feels like being constantly slapped in the face" (qtd. in Stevenson and Li, 2019)

After the 2008 global financial crisis that hit the U.S. economy hard, China was viewed as a key engine for world economic growth. However, the subsequent slowdown in China's economy has been difficult for many businesses and individuals, including those who are seeking employment or hoping to maintain the position they have (da Costa, 2019). A number of major factors have been detrimental to the continued growth of the Chinese economy: domestic problems at home, U.S.-led trade wars, a swine fever outbreak that damaged the pork industry and sent pork prices soaring (da Costa, 2019), and the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic that cut China's economic growth dramatically.

China's economic slowdown has been felt in all sectors of the nation, such as idling factories and construction sites and the loss of jobs by educated, white-collar employees. The problem was further intensified by lack of consumption by middle-class shoppers who previously had purchased more expensive to moderately priced items and kept the retail sector afloat. Tech companies have also been hard-hit by the lackluster economy and startups have had difficulties raising money to get their new endeavors up and running (Stevenson and Li, 2019).

With past discussions about vast economic growth in China and a rapid shift from agriculture and rural living to manufacturing and urban living, many people are surprised that this slowdown has significantly affected the job market. But good jobs are not as readily available as people might have hoped. Positions in the service sector are more readily available, but these involve tasks like subway cleaning (sanitation), retail, and fast-food service that are low-wage jobs. For a period of time, migrant workers performed many of these unskilled and semiskilled jobs, but as the Chinese economy slowed down, migration also slowed.

There is also a mismatch in the job market: China produces millions of new university graduates each year, and the supply greatly outpaces the demand for workers with a college degree. Of course, young people are shocked to find this out after passing ultracompetitive exams to get into the finest institutions of higher education and then working diligently to earn top grades.

As we look at the worldwide workplace, we may see comparisons to our own nation in regard to the employment outlook for people with various levels of education. These examples show the intertwining of a nation's economy and the job opportunities for its residents as they attempt to fit into the existing social and economic structures of a society.

Reflect & Analyze

Does China's slowing economy and changes in workers' opportunities have any effect on our lives? Do you believe the United States has a mismatch between workers and the jobs that are available? Why or why not?

The government is also heavily involved in providing services such as medical care, childcare, and transportation. In Sweden, for example, all residents have health insurance, housing subsidies, child allowances, paid parental leave, and daycare subsidies. Recently, some analysts have suggested that the United States has assumed many of the characteristics of a **welfare state**, a state in which there is extensive government action to provide support and services to the citizens, as it has attempted to meet the basic needs of older adults, young children, unemployed people, and persons with a disability.

mixed economy

an economic system that combines elements of a market economy (capitalism) with elements of a command economy (socialism).

democratic socialism

an economic and political system that combines private ownership of some of the means of production, governmental distribution of some essential goods and services, and free elections.

welfare state

a state in which there is extensive government action to provide support and services to the citizens.

Work in the Contemporary United States

The economy in the United States and other contemporary societies is partially based on the work (purposeful activity, labor, or toil) that people perform. However, work in high-income nations is highly differentiated and often fragmented because people have many kinds of occupations. Some occupations are referred to as professions.

Professions

Although sociologists do not always agree on exactly which occupations are professions, most of them agree that the term *professionals* includes most doctors, natural scientists, engineers, computer scientists, certified public accountants, economists, social scientists, psychotherapists, lawyers, policy experts of various sorts, professors, at least some journalists and editors, some clergy, and some artists and writers.

Characteristics of Professions *Professions* are high-status, knowledge-based occupations that have five major characteristics:

1. *Abstract, specialized knowledge.* Professionals have abstract, specialized knowledge of their field based on formal education and interaction with colleagues.
2. *Autonomy.* Professionals are autonomous in that they can rely on their own judgment in selecting the relevant knowledge or the appropriate technique for dealing with a problem.
3. *Self-regulation.* In exchange for autonomy, professionals are theoretically self-regulating. All professions have licensing, accreditation, and regulatory associations that set professional standards and that require members to adhere to a code of ethics as a form of public accountability.
4. *Authority.* Because of their authority, professionals expect compliance with their directions and advice. Their authority is based on mastery of the body of specialized knowledge and on their profession's autonomy.
5. *Altruism.* Ideally, professionals have concern for others, not just their own self-interest. The word *altruism* implies some degree of self-sacrifice whereby professionals go beyond their self-interest or personal comfort so that they can help a patient or client.

Social Reproduction of Professionals Although higher education is one of the primary qualifications for a profession, the emphasis on education gives children whose parents are professionals a disproportionate advantage early in life. For example, there is a direct linkage between parental education/family income and children's scores on college admissions tests such as the SAT. In turn, test scores

are directly related to students' ability to gain admission to colleges and universities, which serve as springboards to most professions. For this reason, the practice of heavy reliance on SAT, ACT, and other admissions tests for determining who is admitted to certain colleges is being widely debated.

Deprofessionalization Certain professions are undergoing a process of *deprofessionalization*, in which some of the characteristics of a profession are eliminated. Some physicians believe that insurance companies, political leaders, and lobbyists have deprofessionalized their occupation by referring to them as "health care providers" rather than as "medical doctors" or "physicians."

Other Occupations

Occupations are categories of jobs that involve similar activities at different work sites. Many different occupational categories and occupation titles, ranging from motion picture cartoonist to drop-hammer operator, are currently listed by the U.S. Census Bureau. Historically, occupations have been classified as blue collar and white collar. Blue-collar workers were primarily factory and craft workers who did manual labor; white-collar workers were office workers and professionals. However, contemporary workers in the service sector do not easily fit into either of these categories; neither do the so-called pink-collar workers, primarily women, who are employed in occupations such as preschool teacher, dental assistant, secretary, and clerk. (The term refers to an era when some female restaurant employees were required to wear uniforms with a pink collar.)

Sociologists establish broad occupational categories by distinguishing between employment in the primary labor market and in the secondary labor market. The *primary labor market* consists of high-paying jobs with good benefits that have some degree of security and the possibility of future advancement. By contrast, the *secondary labor market* consists of low-paying jobs with few benefits and very little job security or possibility for future advancement.

Upper-Tier Jobs: Managers and Supervisors Managers are essential in contemporary bureaucracies, where work is highly specialized and authority structures are hierarchical. Workers at each level of the hierarchy take orders from their immediate superiors and perhaps give orders to a few subordinates. Upper-level managers are typically responsible for coordination of activities and control of workers.

Lower-Tier and Marginal Jobs Positions in the lower tier of the service sector are part of the secondary labor market, characterized by low wages, little job security, few chances for advancement, higher unemployment rates, and very limited (if any) unemployment benefits. Typical lower-tier positions include janitor, waitperson, messenger, salesclerk, typist, file clerk, migrant laborer, and textile



FIGURE 13.15 Occupational segregation by race and gender is visible in the construction industry, where architects and engineers are more likely to be white (non-Hispanic) men as compared with lower-level supervisors and construction workers, who most often are persons of color or recent immigrants.

worker. Large numbers of young people, people of color, recent immigrants, and white women are employed in this sector (■ Figure 13.15).

Marginal jobs differ from the employment norms of the society in which they are located. Examples of marginal jobs in the U.S. labor market include private household workers—such as launderers, cooks, maids, housekeepers, gardeners, babysitters, and nannies—and personal service employees in eating and drinking places, hotels, laundries, and beauty and nail salons, for example. This kind of work is typically not covered by government work regulations—such as minimum standards of pay, working conditions, and safety standards—and does not offer sufficient hours of work each week to provide a living. The jobs are excluded from most labor legislation, employers often pay cash in order to avoid payroll taxes and Social Security, and the jobs typically provide no insurance or retirement benefits.

Contingent Work

Contingent work is part-time work, temporary work, or subcontracted work that offers advantages to employers but that can be detrimental to the welfare of workers.

Contingent work is found in every segment of the workforce. The federal government is part of this trend, as is private enterprise. In the health care field, physicians, nurses, and other workers are increasingly employed through temporary agencies. Employers benefit by hiring workers on a part-time or temporary basis; they are able to cut costs,

professions

high-status, knowledge-based occupations.

occupations

categories of jobs that involve similar activities at different work sites.

primary labor market

the sector of the labor market that consists of high-paying jobs with good benefits that have some degree of security and the possibility of future advancement.

secondary labor market

the sector of the labor market that consists of low-paying jobs with few benefits and very little job security or possibility for future advancement.

marginal jobs

jobs that differ from the employment norms of the society in which they are located.

maximize profits, and have workers available only when they need them. Temporary workers are the fastest-growing segment of the contingent workforce, and agencies that “place” them have increased dramatically in number in the last decade.

Subcontracted work is another form of contingent work that often cuts employers’ costs at the expense of workers. Instead of employing a large workforce, many companies have significantly reduced the size of their payrolls and benefit plans by **subcontracting**—an agreement in which a corporation contracts with other (usually smaller) firms to provide specialized components, products, or services to the larger corporation. Hiring and paying workers become the responsibility of the subcontractor, not of the larger corporation.

The Underground (Informal) Economy

Some social analysts make a distinction between the legitimate and the underground (informal) economies in the United States. For the most part, the occupations previously described in this chapter operate within the *legitimate economy*: Taxes on income are paid by employers and employees, and individuals who hold jobs requiring a specialized license (such as craftspeople or taxi drivers) possess the appropriate credentials for their work. By contrast, the *underground economy* is made up of a wide variety of activities through which people make money that they do not report to the government and, in some cases, their endeavors may involve criminal behavior. Sometimes referred to as the “shadow economy,” one segment of the underground economy is made up of workers who are paid “off the books,” which means that they are paid in cash, their earnings are not reported, and no taxes are paid. Lawful jobs, such as nannies, construction workers, and landscape/yard workers, are often part of the shadow economy because workers and bosses make under-the-table deals so that both can gain through the transaction: Employers pay less for workers’ services and workers have more money to take home than if they paid taxes on their earnings. The underground economy also involves trade in lawful goods that are sold “off the books” because no taxes are paid on the sales.

The selling of goods in the underground economy may have increased in recent years because of the popularity of online commerce. Although individual sellers are responsible for paying taxes on items sold on websites such as Amazon and eBay, it is unknown how many of the sellers actually report income from their sales.

According to one way of thinking, operating a business in the underground economy reveals capitalism at its best because it shows how the “free market” might work without government intervention. However, from another perspective, selling goods or services in the underground economy borders on—or moves into—criminal behavior. For some individuals the underground economy offers the only alternative to unemployment, particularly in poor communities where people often feel alienated from the wider world and believe that they must use shady means to survive.

Unemployment

Who is considered to be unemployed? Based on a definition established by the Bureau of Labor Statistics, part of the U.S. Department of Labor, people are classified as “unemployed” if they currently do not have a job, have been actively looking for a job within the four weeks prior to the Labor Department’s survey, and are currently available for work. Actively looking for work means that the person must be involved in these activities: contacting employers directly or having a job interview, submitting résumés or filling out applications, answering job ads, checking union and professional registers that show open positions, or engaging in some other active job-search methods.

There are three major types of unemployment: cyclical, seasonal, and structural. *Cyclical unemployment* occurs as a result of lower rates of production during recessions in the business cycle; a recession is a decline in an economy’s total production that lasts at least six months. Although massive layoffs initially occur, some of the workers will eventually be rehired, largely depending on the length and severity of the recession. *Seasonal unemployment* results from shifts in the demand for workers based on conditions such as the weather (in agriculture, the construction industry, and tourism) or the season (holidays and summer vacations). Both of these types of unemployment tend to be relatively temporary.

By contrast, structural unemployment may be permanent. *Structural unemployment* arises because the skills demanded by employers do not match the skills of the unemployed or because the unemployed do not live where the jobs are located. This type of unemployment often occurs when a number of plants in the same industry are closed or when new technology makes certain jobs obsolete. Structural unemployment often results from capital flight—the investment of capital in foreign facilities, as previously discussed. Today, many workers fear losing their jobs, exhausting their unemployment benefits (if any), and still not being able to find another job.

The **unemployment rate** is the percentage of unemployed persons in the labor force actively seeking jobs. The twenty-first century has seen changes in the unemployment rate. The U.S. unemployment rate in 2000 was 4.0 percent. By 2011, the overall rate hovered around 9 percent before falling to 3.5 percent in November 2019. About 5.8 million individuals were classified as unemployed in November 2019. The overall U.S. unemployment rate for white (non-Hispanic) adult men and women (twenty years and over) was 3.5 percent, as compared to African Americans at 5.5 percent, Hispanics (Latinx) at 4.2 percent, and Asian Americans at 2.6 percent. Although the percentages vary slightly over various times, the trends remain regarding differences in unemployment among divergent racial and ethnic categories.

How reliable are unemployment statistics? This is a widely debated topic among politicians and media analysts. We must consider that, like other types of “official” statistics, unemployment rates may not provide

us with the whole story. Individuals who become discouraged in their attempt to find work and no longer actively seek employment are not counted as unemployed. Some analysts believe that unemployment rates may drop for a period of time because people either do not seek work or they accept part-time or temporary jobs when they cannot find full-time employment. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2019a), 1.2 million people were marginally attached to the labor force in 2019, but they were seeking employment and had looked for a job at some time during the prior twelve months. Among the marginally attached were 325,000 “discouraged workers” who were not currently looking for work because they believed that no jobs were available for them or they had other problems in seeking employment at that time (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2019a).

Labor Unions and Worker Activism

In their individual and collective struggles to improve their work environment and gain some degree of control over their work-related activities, workers have used a number of methods to resist workplace alienation. Many have joined labor unions to gain strength through collective action. Others have engaged in various forms of worker activism.

Labor Unions U.S. labor unions came into being in the mid-nineteenth century. Unions have been credited with gaining an eight-hour workday, a five-day workweek, health and retirement benefits, sick leave and unemployment insurance, and workplace health and safety standards for many employees. As one bumper sticker reads, “Unions: The folks who brought you the weekend.”

Most of these gains have occurred through *collective bargaining*—negotiations between employers and labor union leaders on behalf of workers. However, some states have passed laws making it harder for workers to organize or to engage in collective bargaining. For example, Wisconsin passed a law that bans collective bargaining by unionized government workers for benefits and pensions but allows them to bargain as a union for pay as long as their raises do not exceed the rate of inflation.

Some analysts attribute diminished support for unions to the fact that more people may have had a better understanding of unions in the past because more individuals belonged to unions or had family members who did, while unions have now largely disappeared from the private sector. In the past, more union leaders called for strikes to force employers to accept the union’s position on wages and benefits. The number of workers involved in the actions declined from a peak of more than 2.5 million in 1971 to 485,000 in 2018, when there were twenty major work stoppages involving one thousand or more workers (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2019e). Work stoppages in 2018 were primarily in educational services, health care, social assistance, and the steel industry.

Union membership has not been growing over the past three decades. In 2018 only 10.5 percent of wage and

salary workers were union members, as compared with 20.1 percent in 1983, the first year for which the federal government compiled such data (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2019e). The total number of wage and salary workers belonging to unions was 14.7 million in 2018. Union membership is higher for public-sector workers (33.9 percent) than for private-sector employees (6.4 percent). Workers in protective-service occupations (such as police officers and fire fighters) have the highest unionization rate, at 33.8 percent, followed by workers in education, training, and library occupations, at 33.8 percent. More men (11.1 percent) are union members than women (9.9 percent) (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2019e). If unions continue to “age” in their membership ranks and decline in overall membership and involvement in the workplace, should we anticipate that this will have an even more detrimental effect on the hard-earned gains of workers in the United States? Or is the era of labor union influence on the U.S. workplace and economy effectively reaching its end? These questions remain to be more fully answered in the future.

Employment Opportunities for Persons with a Disability

For many years, people with disabilities have been steered away from occupations by teachers, parents, prospective employers, and others who have tended to focus more on what persons with disabilities cannot do rather than what they are capable of doing. In 1990 the United States became the first nation to formally address the issue of equality for persons with a disability when Congress passed the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) to prohibit discrimination on the basis of disability. Combined with previous disability rights laws (such as those that provide for the elimination of architectural barriers from new, federally funded buildings and for the maximum integration of schoolchildren with disabilities), the ADA is a legal mandate for the full equality of people with disabilities. The federal law defines a person with a disability as an individual with at least one of the following conditions: He or she is deaf or has serious difficulty hearing; is blind or has serious difficulty seeing even when wearing glasses; has serious difficulty concentrating, remembering, or making decisions

contingent work

part-time work, temporary work, or subcontracted work that offers advantages to employers but that can be detrimental to the welfare of workers.

subcontracting

an agreement in which a corporation contracts with other (usually smaller) firms to provide specialized components, products, or services to the larger corporation.

unemployment rate

the percentage of unemployed persons in the labor force actively seeking jobs.

YOU CAN **Make a Difference**

Keeping an Eye on the Media

Do we get all of the news that we should about how our government operates and about the pressing social problems of our nation? Consider this list of five out of “The Top 25 Censored Stories of 2018–2019” news stories that media analysts such as Project Censored (2019) believe were *not* adequately covered by the U.S. media in 2018–2019:

1. **Justice Department’s Secret FISA Rules for Targeting Journalism.** Information obtained through a Freedom of Information Act request revealed that the government might be using court orders to monitor communications of journalists and news organizations. Previously, it had been assumed that the First Amendment protected journalists and their sources from such surveillance.
2. **Think Tank Partnerships Establish Facebook as Tool of U.S. Foreign Policy.** Facebook established partnership with the Atlantic Council, a NATO-sponsored think tank, to identify disinformation campaigns around the world and to keep abuse from occurring on the Facebook platform. Many journalists considered the organizations that Facebook chose to cooperate with as being propaganda organizations and were deeply concerned that these organizations, along with Facebook, would work together to control the flow of information so that it would reflect their own interests without any public scrutiny.
3. **Indigenous Groups from Amazon Propose Creation of Largest Protected Area on Earth.** Little media coverage has been given to the fact that the Amazon’s biodiversity is being destroyed for profits and political gain by agribusiness, mining, and the global climate crisis. Even less coverage and support have been given to the five hundred indigenous groups from nine countries that are trying to safeguard a protected corridor to preserve life and culture.
4. **U.S. Oil and Gas Industry Set to Unleash 120 Billion Tons of New Carbon Emissions.** “Drilling Toward Disaster,” a report on this burst of new carbon emissions through 2050 and its potentially harmful effects, has received only limited coverage on independent media outlets and NPR affiliates. Major corporate news outlets have not reported on effects of this new carbon pollution on the environment and climate change.

5. **“Modern Slavery” in the United States and around the World.** Only limited coverage has been given to the problem of “modern slavery” in the form of forced labor (in areas such as agriculture, prison labor, global supply chains, and the sex industry) and forced marriage (especially among migrant women and children) in our nation and worldwide.

According to Project Censored, an organization of students and professors who have produced an annual “Top Censored Stories” list at Sonoma State University since 1976, many important stories in the twenty-first century are either missing from the news altogether or do not receive adequate attention. The Project has now expanded to include faculty and students from campuses throughout the United States. (To view the entire list of censored stories for various years, visit the website for Project Censored.)

What should be the role of the media in keeping us informed? The media are referred to as the “Fourth Estate” or the “Fourth Branch of the Government” because they are supposed to provide people with relevant information on important topics regarding how the government operates in a democratic society. This information can then be used by citizens to decide how they will vote on candidates and issues presented for their approval or disapproval on the election ballot.

Concern has increased that some news media outlets are blurring the facts or taking sides on issues such as global warming. A fear exists that many important news stories are ignored, misreported, or simply censored by “mainstream” media, which are controlled by elite corporate interests. How can we become more aware of how the media influence our thinking on pressing issues? The first step is to become more analytical about the “news” that we do receive. Becoming aware of the media’s role in influencing people’s opinions about how our government is run will help us to become informed participants in the democratic political process. Becoming aware of national and international events that should receive more coverage than they do or that might not be reported in a fair and unbiased manner is also important. With traditional mainstream media, these steps are somewhat easier to follow; however, with many 24/7 cable news networks and vast social media outlets, we must look closer to distinguish individual opinion or “alternate facts” from concrete information and facts that can be documented. What steps do you think we should take to accomplish this goal?

because of a physical, mental, or emotional condition; has serious difficulty walking or climbing stairs; has difficulty dressing or bathing; or has difficulty doing errands alone such as visiting a doctor’s office or shopping because of a physical, mental, or emotional condition.

Despite the ADA and other laws regarding disability rights, many persons with a disability remain unemployed or have been tracked into disability-related service roles (such as helping other persons with a disability). Employment opportunities for persons with a disability have increased in

recent years. In 2019 about 30.4 percent of persons between the ages of sixteen and sixty-four with one or more disabilities were employed as compared to an employment rate of 74.0 percent for persons without disabilities (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2019c). Many other persons with disabilities were not in the labor force at all, nor were they actively seeking employment. Individuals with a disability tend to be older than persons with no disability, reflecting the increased incident of disability with age. In 2018, 49 percent of persons with a disability were age sixty-five and older, compared with 16 percent of those with no disability. Overall, women are more likely to have a disability than men, which partly may be reflection of the longer life expectancy of women. Disability was also higher for African Americans and white (non-Hispanic) persons than for Hispanics and Asians. All these factors must be taken into account when analyzing data on labor-force participation of persons with a disability (U. S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2019c).

Looking Ahead: Politics and the Global Economy in the Future

Thinking about U.S. politics and government in the future is very much like the old story about optimists and pessimists. According to the story, an eight-ounce cup containing exactly four ounces of water is placed on a table. The optimist comes in, sees the cup, and says, “The cup is half full.” The pessimist comes in, sees the cup, and says, “The cup is half empty.” Clearly, both the pessimist and the optimist are looking at the same cup containing the same amount of water, but their perspective on what they see is quite different. For some analysts, looking at the future of the U.S. government and the economy is very much like this.

Views of the future of politics and government relate to specific concerns about the United States:

- What will be the future of political parties? What did the last presidential election tell us about the nature of political parties and politics?
- Are global corporate interests and the concerns of the wealthy and powerful overshadowing the needs and interests of everyday people?
- How will elected politicians and appointed government officials handle the challenges facing the United States in a global economy and rapidly shrinking world?
- Do the media accurately report what is going on at all levels of government? To what extent can individuals and grassroots organizations influence the media and the political process? (See the “You Can Make a Difference” box).

How will the U.S. economy look in the future? What about the global economy? Although sociologists do not have a crystal ball with which to predict the future, some general trends can be suggested.

Many of the trends we examined in this chapter will produce dramatic changes in the organization of the economy and work in the future. U.S. workers may find themselves fighting for a larger piece of an ever-shrinking economic pie. Persons between the ages of twenty-five and thirty-four have entered the work world in rapidly increasing numbers. It remains to be seen whether this job growth will be sustained, but, if so, it suggests that the U.S. economy might be stronger than it has been in the past decade.

Of course, one of the greatest concerns for the future is employment for U.S. workers. Well-paid jobs have been the backbone of the middle class in this country, as well as a major source of upward mobility for people throughout history. For much of the twentieth century, permanent, stable jobs were the norm. These jobs provided opportunities for advancement and employee benefits such as health insurance and a retirement plan. Entering the third decade of the twenty-first century, the norm has become a job market divided between well-paid, stable employment and lower-paying jobs or temporary and contingent work that provides little job security and a feeling of stagnation. Thus, workers are increasingly fragmented into two major labor-market divisions: (1) those who work in the more innovative, primary sector and (2) those whose jobs are located in the growing secondary, marginal sector. In the innovative sector, increased productivity will be the watchword as corporations respond to heightened international competition. In the marginal sector, alienation continues to grow as temporary workers, sometimes including professionals, look for a chance to increase their earnings and find job security.

Where will the greatest problems be in the workforce? Workers with less formal education are losing ground on wages faster than other workers because the kinds of jobs that are available have changed. Men with fewer years of formal education hold fewer jobs in well-paid manufacturing positions than they did in the past. More men with fewer years of education tend to be employed in low-wage jobs, such as food service, groundskeeping, and maintenance. Even manufacturing employees are earning less (when adjusted for inflation) than workers who held similar positions a generation ago. So, as we look toward the future, the economy looks bleakest for those with limited years of formal education who work in low-wage positions with no opportunity for advancement or who are long-term unemployed.

Some analysts attribute work-related problems, particularly in manufacturing jobs, to a long, downward slide in union organization and membership. Employees have lost bargaining power, globalization and technological advances have eliminated many jobs, and less-educated workers are forced to compete for a limited number of low-wage jobs in food service and maintenance. These factors contribute to a further depression of wages. How will the decline in labor unions affect workers in the future? The decline of organized labor has already

affected *all* occupation groups, but the problem will be most intense in private-sector occupations that were formerly unionized. Although the Pew study found that labor-union membership had declined overall, there was a slight increase in labor organizing in management occupations, even by some workers who formerly opposed union activism. Persons in management occupations, such as construction foreman, food-service manager, school administrator, and other mid-level supervisory personnel, have experienced an inflation-adjusted decline in annual wages in recent years, thus making them more responsive to labor-union participation.

In looking at the future of the U.S. economic system, it is obvious that the general public is very critical of the power held by major corporations that operate in the United States and around the world. As many people see their share of the economic pie declining, they are very

disturbed to see the profits made by corporations and the wealthiest persons in the world increasing dramatically. For example, a Pew Research Center study (DeSilver, 2019) found that nearly 75 percent of U.S. adults believe that major corporations have too much power and that they make too much profit. Moreover, nearly half of the respondents in this study indicated that they believed that business and technology leaders did not understand the challenges that everyday people face in their own lives (DeSilver, 2019).

Despite the many problems we have discussed in politics, the workplace, and the U.S. economy, some economists and political leaders suggest that there is reason for cautious optimism about the future. What do you think will happen in politics, the economy, and work in the future? What effect will these external factors have on your own life?

Q&A Chapter Review

Use these questions and answers to check how well you've achieved the learning objectives set out at the beginning of this chapter.

LO1 How are the terms *power* and *authority* defined? What are the differences in traditional, charismatic, and rational–legal authority?

Power is the ability of persons or groups to carry out their will even when opposed by others. Authority is power that people accept as legitimate rather than coercive. Max Weber identified these types of authority: traditional, charismatic, and rational–legal. Traditional authority is based on long-standing custom. Charismatic authority is power based on a leader's personal qualities. Rational–legal authority is based on law or written rules and regulations, as found in contemporary bureaucracies.

LO2 What are the main types of political systems around the world?

The main types of political systems are monarchies, authoritarian systems, totalitarian systems, and democratic systems. In a monarchy, one person is the hereditary ruler of the nation. In authoritarian systems, rulers tolerate little or no public opposition and generally cannot be removed from office by legal means. In totalitarian systems, the state seeks to regulate all aspects of society and to monopolize all societal resources in order to exert complete control over both public and private life. In democratic systems, the powers of government are derived from the consent of all the people.

LO3 How does the functionalist/pluralist perspective view power in the United States? What part do elites play in political systems?

According to the pluralist (functionalist) model, power is widely dispersed throughout many competing interest groups. People influence policy by voting, joining special interest groups and political action campaigns, and forming new groups. Contemporary elite models of power are based on the assumption that power is highly concentrated at the top of the social hierarchy, and important decisions are made by the elites without taking into account the needs and concerns of the masses.

LO4 What are the main features of the U.S. political system?

The U.S. political system is made up of formal elements such as the legislative process and the duties of the president. It is also made up of information elements such as the role of political parties in the election process. A political party (1) develops and articulates policy positions, (2) educates voters about issues and simplifies the choices for them, and (3) recruits candidates who agree with those policies, helps those candidates win office, and holds the candidates responsible for implementing the party's policy positions. Some people who are displeased with current political parties form their own organization; however, others simply

do not participate, contributing to low rates of voter turnout and high rates of voter apathy in many elections.

LO5 What are the primary functions of economies around the world? How do preindustrial, industrial, and postindustrial economies compare?

The economy is the social institution that ensures the maintenance of society through the production, distribution, and consumption of goods and services. Preindustrial economies include hunting-and-gathering, horticultural and pastoral, and agrarian societies. Most workers engage in primary-sector production—the extraction of raw materials and natural resources from the environment. Industrial societies engage in secondary-sector production, which is based on the processing of raw materials (from the primary sector) into finished goods. Postindustrial societies engage in tertiary-sector production by providing services rather than goods.

LO6 What are the key characteristics of capitalism, socialism, and mixed economies?

Capitalism is characterized by private ownership of the means of production, the pursuit of personal profit, competition, and limited government intervention. By contrast, socialism is characterized by public ownership of the means of production, the pursuit of collective goals, and centralized decision making. In mixed economies, elements of a capitalist, market economy are combined with elements of a command, socialist economy. These mixed economies are often referred to as democratic socialism.

LO7 What are the characteristics of professions? How do professions differ from other occupations?

Professions are high-status, knowledge-based occupations characterized by abstract, specialized knowledge; autonomy; self-regulation; authority over clients and subordinate occupational groups; and a degree of altruism. Occupations are categories of jobs that involve similar activities at different work sites. These occupational categories are often divided into positions in the *primary labor market*—high-paying jobs with good benefits, some degree of security, and the possibility of future advancement—and jobs in the *secondary labor market*—low-paying jobs with few benefits, little job security, and limited possibility for future advancement.

LO8 What problems are associated with contingent work, the underground (informal) economy, and unemployment? What part have labor unions and

worker activism played in improving working conditions in the United States?

Contingent work is part-time work, temporary work, or sub-contracted work that offers advantages to employers but may be detrimental to workers. Through the use of contingent workers, employers are able to cut costs and maximize profits, but workers have little or no job security. The underground economy is made up of a wide variety of activities through which people make money that they do not report to the government or through endeavors that may involve criminal behavior. Labor unions have provided workers with strength in numbers to help them gain better job safety and benefits; however, unions have decreased in membership in recent decades. Worker activism is often more spontaneous in that employees usually bind together more informally to demand better working conditions, benefits, and pensions. Some workers who participate in job-related activism are members of labor unions, but many others are not.

LO9 What contemporary patterns exist in politics, the economy, and employment in the United States? What may occur in politics, the economy, and employment in the future?

Although the structure of U.S. politics has remained basically the same for many years, how the presidency, various branches of government, and bureaucratic agencies operate has changed dramatically in recent decades. The Trump administration has rejected from many traditional practices that have been followed for decades and, in some cases, even centuries regarding governance and administration. DeSilver (2019) studies show that the United States is more politically polarized in the 2000s and has sharper divides within political party coalitions than it has in the past. These divisions include arguments over fundamental political values, how the various branches of government (executive, legislative, and judicial) should function, and the severity of local, national, and global problems facing our nation. The list of controversial issues is far too long to enumerate here, but many are discussed throughout this text.

Now and in the future, disputes exist about the economic system and what kinds of social safety nets (such as food stamps, health care for all, free college tuition, and resources for persons who are older and/or disabled) should be provided by various levels of government. In the economic realm, DeSilver (2019) studies found that the U.S. public is especially critical about the decisions of major corporations and their use of excessive power to derive profits and political influence. A few of the pressing economic issues facing our nation now and in the future include tax cuts for the wealthy, particularly individuals in the top 0.01 percent and above, multi-billion-dollar-earning corporations, and what to do about the federal minimum wage and providing paid sick and parental/caretaker leave for more workers. Let's

take a closer look at the issue of raising the federal minimum wage above the current rate of \$7.25 an hour, and why this idea remains so controversial. Although it is true that some state and local governments already have increased minimum-wage standards in their jurisdictions, these changes have not affected the entire working population.

Why wouldn't everyone want for workers to be more adequately compensated for the work they do? What about cost-of-living increases that have occurred since the federal minimum wage was last increased in 2009? Some of the strongest objections have come from opponents who argue that if companies are required to pay higher wages, they will employ fewer workers and that this will be harmful for the overall U.S. economy. Those who are in favor of increasing the federal minimum wage cite examples of how job growth has remained strong and unemployment rates have gone down even with these wage increases in some

cities and states. In some cases, it means that for workers to earn a living wage, prices might have to be increased and corporate shareholders might experience slightly lower returns on their investments, probably in an amount that would be inconsequential for many shareholders who are already millionaires or billionaires (based on *New York Times*, 2019).

We can only hope for some degree of compromise to be reached in the future on minimum wages and many other issues so that the needs of more Americans and people in other nations may be met in the most efficient manner. Otherwise, we may face a future that offers less hope than this nation has provided for its people and nations worldwide than in past decades and centuries. What optimistic scenarios do you envision for the future? What limitations do you believe exist in our quest to improve the life chances and opportunities for people around the world?

Key Terms

authoritarianism 385	military-industrial complex 396	rational-legal authority 382
authority 382	mixed economy 402	representative democracy 385
capitalism 398	monarchy 384	routinization of charisma 382
charismatic authority 382	occupations 404	secondary labor market 404
conglomerate 400	oligopoly 399	secondary-sector production 397
contingent work 405	pluralist model 386	shared monopoly 399
corporations 398	political action committees (PACs) 386	socialism 401
democracy 385	political party 390	state 381
democratic socialism 402	political socialization 393	subcontracting 406
economy 397	politics 381	tertiary-sector production 398
elite model 388	power 382	totalitarianism 385
government 381	primary labor market 404	traditional authority 382
interlocking corporate directorates 400	primary-sector production 397	transnational corporations 398
marginal jobs 405	professions 404	unemployment rate 406
		welfare state 403

Questions for Critical Thinking

- 1 Who is ultimately responsible for decisions and policies that are made in a democracy such as the United States: the people or their elected representatives? Why is it important to examine how economic influences affect the political process in the United States and other nations?
- 2 How would you design a research project that studies the effects of media, particularly social media, on people's views about political candidates and issues? What would be your hypothesis? What kinds of data would you need to gather? How would you gather accurate data?

Answers to **Sociology Quiz**

Politics and the Media

1	True	Despite the “digital divide” (which means unequal access to online services because of income and racial inequalities), 90 percent of adults in the United States indicate in studies that they use the Internet, and many are also social media users.
2	False	Although social media sites contain extensive political news, about 46 percent of users in a recent Pew Research Center study indicated that they were “worn out” by political posts and discussions.
3	True	Sixty-eight percent of social media users found that it was stressful to talk politics with those with whom they disagreed. By contrast, 27 percent found such discussions to be interesting and informative.
4	True	About 67 percent of social media users indicate that discussing politics on social media with people whom they disagree leads them to the conclusion that they have less in common with the other person than they previously had thought.
5	True	Young adults between the ages of eighteen and twenty-nine and African Americans are more likely to indicate that social media are important for learning more about politics than are white (non-Hispanic) Americans and Hispanics.
6	False	The vast majority of social media users do not indicate that they have substantially changed their political views or activities based on information they have learned from social media sites.
7	False	Partly as a result of substantial cuts in newsroom personnel, media campaign reporters are now less involved in investigative journalism and instead primarily broadcast statements and assertions set forth by political candidates and their managers without interpreting or contextualizing these messages.
8	True	Audiences for local TV news programs have continued to decline over the past decade, even in years in which a presidential election is held.

Source: Based on Anderson et al., 2019; Anderson and Quinn, 2019.



Health, Health Care, and Disability **14**

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- 1 Discuss** the key aspects of health and health care.
- 2 Discuss** the concept of social epidemiology and the demographic factors involved in social epidemiologists' investigations.
- 3 Explain** the features of health care in the United States.
- 4 Discuss** the key aspects of medical care in the United States.
- 5 Compare** the features of medical care in Canada, Great Britain, and the People's Republic of China.
- 6 Describe** the implications of advanced medical technology and the features of holistic medicine and alternative medicine.
- 7 Compare** the major sociological perspectives on health and medicine.
- 8 Discuss** the key aspects of mental disorders.
- 9 Discuss** the concept of disability and the major sociological perspectives on disability.
- 10 Discuss** the transformation of the health care system in the United States.

SOCIOLOGY & **Everyday Life**

Medicine as a Social Institution

Medicine is, I have found, a strange and in many ways disturbing business. The stakes are high, the liberties taken tremendous. We drug people, put needles and tubes into them, manipulate their chemistry, biology, and physics, lay them unconscious and open their bodies up to the world. We do so out of an abiding confidence in our know-how as a profession. What you find when you get in close, however—close enough to see the furrowed brows, the doubts and missteps, the failures as well as the successes—is how messy, uncertain, and also surprising medicine turns out to be.

The thing that still startles me is how fundamentally human an endeavor it is. Usually, when we think about medicine and its remarkable abilities, what comes to mind is the science and all it has given us to fight sickness and misery: the tests, the machines, the drugs, the procedures. And without question, these are at the center of virtually everything medicine achieves. But we rarely see how it all actually works. You have a cough that won't go away—and then? It's not science you call upon but a doctor. A doctor with good days and bad days. A doctor with a weird laugh and a bad haircut. A doctor



Erik Jacobs/The New York Times/Redux

Dr. Atul Gawande (center) has written movingly about the differences between people's expectations of physicians and the medical establishment and the realities that they find in health care today. Sociologists study these contradictions to better understand a very complex and important part of U.S. social life.

with three other patients to see and, inevitably, gaps in what he knows and skills he's still trying to learn. . . . We look for medicine to be an orderly field of knowledge and procedure.

The everyday life of a doctor such as Atul Gawande is filled with its high points and low points: Some patients benefit from medical treatments they receive from physicians, whereas others have sustained injuries or developed illnesses that are too severe or are beyond the scope of current knowledge and practice in the health care system to be successfully resolved. Physicians are human beings just like the patients they treat; however, much more is expected of them because of the availability of health care in the United States and other high-income nations and because the dominant role of doctors in modern high-tech medicine has led many individuals to believe that virtually anything should be possible when it comes to one's health and longevity. However, this assumption is often not an accurate reflection of how health, illness, and health care actually work. And the issue of our eventual mortality is often left out of discussions about topics in medicine. According to Dr. Gawande's bestselling book, *Being Mortal*: "Arriving at an acceptance of one's mortality and a clear understanding of the limits and the possibilities of medicine is a process, not an epiphany" (qtd. in Fink, 2014).

What does the concept of health mean to you? At one time, health was considered to be simply the absence of disease. However, the World

Health Organization (WHO) now defines **health** as a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being. According to this definition, health involves not only the absence of disease but also a positive sense of wellness. In other words, health is a multidimensional phenomenon: It includes physical, social, and psychological factors.

What do you think of when you hear the word "illness"? *Illness* refers to an interference with health; like health, illness is socially defined and may change over time and between cultures. For example, in the United States and Canada, obesity is viewed as unhealthy, whereas in other times and places, obesity indicated that a person was prosperous and healthy.

What happens when a person is perceived to have an illness or disease? Healing involves both personal and institutional responses to perceived illness and disease. One aspect of institutional healing is health care and the health care delivery system in a society. **Health care** is any activity intended to improve health. When people experience illness, they often seek medical attention in hopes of having their health restored. A vital part of health care is **medicine**—an institutionalized system for the scientific diagnosis, treatment, and prevention of illness.

In this chapter we explore the dynamics of health, health care, and disability from a sociological perspective, as well as look at issues through

But it is not. It is an imperfect science, an enterprise of constantly changing knowledge, uncertain information, fallible individuals, and at the same time lives on the line. There is science in what we do, yes, but also habit, intuition, and sometimes plain old guessing. The gap between what we know and what we aim for persists. And this gap complicates everything we do.

—ATUL GAWANDE, M.D. (2002: 4, 5, 7), was a surgical resident when he wrote these words describing how he felt about the power and the limits of medicine. In 2020 he was serving as chief executive of Haven, a nonprofit organization (formed by Amazon, Berkshire Hathaway, and JPMorgan Chase & Co.) to focus on fixing U.S. health care by upending traditional methods of doing business (Ross, 2019). Dr. Gawande also has been a professor at Harvard University School of Public Health and a surgeon at Brigham and Women's Hospital in Boston.

How Much Do You Know About Health, Illness, and Health Care?

TRUE	FALSE	
T	F	1 The idea that everyone should have guaranteed health insurance coverage is accepted by nearly all Americans.
T	F	2 Worldwide, most HIV infections are spread by homosexual contact.
T	F	3 The primary reason that African Americans have shorter life expectancies than whites is the high rate of violence in central cities and the rural South.
T	F	4 The most common cause of death among Americans age 15–24 is unintentional injuries.
T	F	5 Health care in most high-income, developed nations is organized on a fee-for-service basis as it is in the United States.
T	F	6 The medical–industrial complex has operated in the United States with virtually no regulation, and allegations of health care fraud have largely been overlooked by federal and state governments.
T	F	7 Media coverage of chronic depression and other mental conditions focuses primarily on these problems as “women’s illnesses.”
T	F	8 About two-thirds of U.S. adults are either overweight or obese.

Answers can be found at the end of the chapter.

the eyes of those who have experienced medical problems. Before reading on, test your knowledge about health, illness, and health care by taking the “Sociology and Everyday Life” quiz. ●

Health in Global Perspective

Why is it important to know about health and health care worldwide? Studying health and health care issues around the world offers each of us important insights on illness and how political and economic forces shape health care in nations. Disparities in health are glaringly apparent between high-income and low-income nations when we examine factors such as the prevalence of life-threatening diseases, rates of life expectancy and infant mortality, and access to health services. Statistics on global health typically run a year or two behind when you are reading this, but it is important to see trends in illness and health care. For example, one important trend in HIV/AIDS data is that progress is being made in reducing this disease but much more remains to be done: Approximately

1.7 million people worldwide became newly infected with HIV in 2018, and about 770,000 million died from AIDS-related causes (UNAIDS, 2019). Compare these figures to the approximately two million people worldwide who became newly infected in 2014 and the 1.2 million deaths that occurred from AIDS-related causes in that same year. Today, many more people (about 24.5 million) are living with HIV rather than dying from the illness because they are able to access antiretroviral therapy. However, AIDS is only one of a number of diseases reducing life expectancy in many nations.

health

a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being.

health care

any activity intended to improve health.

medicine

an institutionalized system for the scientific diagnosis, treatment, and prevention of illness.

A key aspect of health and health care is **life expectancy**, which refers to a statistical estimate of the average number of years that a person born in a specific year will live. Sometimes life expectancy is calculated from birth; other times it is calculated based on how long an individual at a given age can expect to live given present mortality rates. Worldwide, life expectancy at birth ranges from a low of 50.6 years in Chad to a high of 89.4 years in Monaco (*CIA World Factbook*, 2019a). Life expectancy in low- and middle-income nations is often reduced by problems such as infectious and parasitic diseases that are now rare in high-income, industrialized nations. Among these diseases are tuberculosis, polio, measles, diphtheria, meningitis, hepatitis, malaria, and leprosy.

The **infant mortality rate** is the number of deaths of infants under one year of age per 1,000 live births in a given year. In 2018 the infant mortality rate ranged from a low of 1.8 in high-income nations such as Monaco to a high of 108.5 in low-income nations such as Afghanistan (■ Figure 14.1). Consider the vast difference in a nation where more than 108 infants out of every 1,000 born in a specific year die before their first birthday, as compared with another nation in which slightly fewer than two infants out of every 1,000 infants born in the same year die before their first birthday. In Monaco, for example, a low infant mortality rate may be associated with overall extreme wealth in the small country, well-educated mothers, and a good health care system. High infant mortality rates are often attributed to malaria, malnutrition, undeveloped infrastructure, poor conditions in health facilities in rural areas, and other factors associated with wartorn nations.

There are many other reasons for differences in life expectancy and infant mortality. Many people in low-income countries have insufficient or contaminated food; lack access to pure, safe water; and do not have adequate sewage and refuse disposal. Added to these hazards is a lack

of information about how to maintain good health. Many of these nations also lack qualified physicians and health care facilities with up-to-date equipment and medical procedures.

Nevertheless, tremendous progress has been made in saving the lives of children and adults over the past three decades. One of the key indicators of the level of human development in a nation or region is the rate at which children survive. Referred to as “child survival,” this is often measured by the child’s fifth birthday. However, even for children who survive past this birthday, poor health is still a major concern because it can permanently damage their cognitive development and ability to fully function as an adult (United Nations Development Programme, 2019).

Despite progress that has been made in life expectancy and medical care, many challenges remain. Worldwide, the amount of money spent on health care varies widely, and the extent to which persons derive improved medical attention or quality of life through higher expenditures (such as in the United States) is not easily measured. However, the lack of adequate funds to pay for appropriate health care is also a pressing concern. A key issue in health care is the cost and availability of advanced diagnostic and surgical technologies and lifesaving drugs around the world (■ Figure 14.2). Advanced technologies such as the da Vinci surgery system (physician-directed robotic surgery) and magnetic resonance imaging machines cost in the range of \$1.5 million to \$3 million, not including expenses involved in creating specially designed suites to house the equipment.

Similarly, drugs to reduce pain and suffering or to save lives are very costly for individuals and medical institutions. The major pharmaceutical companies that hold patents on the most widely used drugs believe that their name-brand products need to be protected by law, whereas people in international human relief agencies believe that the most important concern is providing needed medication to the one-third of the world’s population that does not have access to essential medicines. Transnational pharmaceutical companies fear that if they provide their name-brand drugs (if these are the only ones available to treat a specific condition) at lower prices in low-income countries, this will undercut their major sales base in high-income countries. For this reason, companies are reluctant to provide inexpensive or free drugs to people in low-income countries while, at the same time, they have been aggressively marketing name-brand drugs to patients in high-income nations through television, online sites, and social media. If we are to see a significant improvement in life expectancy and health among people of all nations, improvements are needed in accessibility to advanced medical technologies and cost-effective drugs.

How about improvements in health and health care within one nation? Is there a positive relationship between the amount of money that a society spends on health care and the overall physical, mental, and social well-being of its people? Not necessarily. If there were such a relationship, people in the United States would be among the healthiest



Natee K. Jindakum/Shutterstock.com

FIGURE 14.1 Japan has one of the lowest infant mortality rates in the world. Why? Finding the answer to this question would benefit people in every nation.

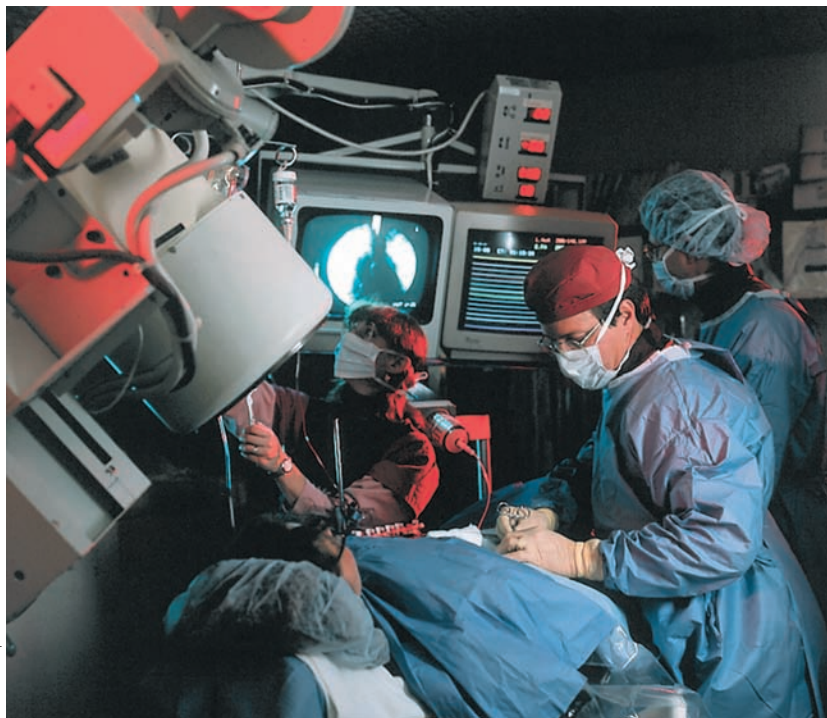


FIGURE 14.2 Access to quality health care is much greater for some people than for others. The factors that are involved vary not only for people within one nation but also across the nations of the world.

and most physically fit in the world. Some estimates suggest that we spend as much as \$3.6 trillion annually on health care. Moreover, health care spending continues to account for about 18 percent of the gross domestic product (GDP) in the United States.

By contrast, in other nations where residents are provided with universal health coverage, the goal is to provide all people with the preventive, curative, rehabilitative, and palliative health services they need while ensuring that the services do not create financial hardship for patients. *Preventive care* seeks to reduce the rate of illness by proactive

measures before a person becomes ill. An example is a wellness program that offers diet and exercise plans to help promote fitness. *Curative services* involve treatment to alleviate illness or promote healing after an injury. *Rehabilitative services* seek to restore some or all of the patient's physical, sensory, and mental capabilities that were reduced or lost because of illness, disease, or injury. *Palliative services* are medical care that helps reduce pain, symptoms, and stress associated with very serious health conditions. This type of treatment is directed toward improving a patient's quality of life but not necessarily extending the person's life.

Health in the United States

Looking at the United States specifically, why do you think that some of us are healthier than others? Is it biology—our genes—that accounts for this difference? Does the environment within which we live have an effect? How about our own individual lifestyle? Social epidemiology attempts to answer questions such as these.

Social Epidemiology

Social epidemiology is the study of the causes and distribution of health, disease, and impairment throughout a population. Typically, the target of social epidemiologists' investigations is disease agents, the environment, and the human host. *Disease agents* include biological agents such as insects, bacteria, and viruses that carry or cause disease; nutrient agents such as fats and carbohydrates; chemical agents such as gases and pollutants in the air; and physical agents such as temperature, humidity, and radiation. The *environment* includes the physical (geography and climate), biological (presence or absence

life expectancy

a statistical estimate of the average number of years that a person born in a specific year will live.

infant mortality rate

the number of deaths of infants under one year of age per 1,000 live births in a given year.

social epidemiology

the study of the causes and distribution of health, disease, and impairment throughout a population.

of known disease agents), and social (socio-economic status, occupation, and location of home) environments. The *human host* takes into account demographic factors (age, sex, and race/ethnicity), physical condition, habits and customs, and lifestyle. Let's look briefly at some of these factors.

Age Rates of illness and death are highest among the old and the young. Mortality rates drop shortly after birth and begin to rise significantly during middle age. As many people reach their late sixties or seventies, rates of chronic diseases and mortality increase. **Chronic diseases** are illnesses that are long term or lifelong and that develop gradually or are present from birth; in contrast, **acute diseases** are illnesses that strike suddenly and cause dramatic incapacitation and sometimes death. Two of the most common sources of chronic disease and premature death are tobacco use, which increases mortality among both persons who smoke and the people who breathe the tobacco smoke of others, and alcohol abuse, both of which are discussed later in this chapter.

The fact that rates of chronic diseases increase as people grow older has obvious implications for individuals, their families, and the entire nation. Population aging has national implications in health care spending, as well as institutional long-term care, which is particularly costly for older age groups. As the U.S. population continues to age in the third decade of the twenty-first century, additional upward pressure will be placed on health care facilities and overall medical spending.

Sex Prior to the twentieth century, women had lower life expectancies than men because women had high mortality rates because of pregnancy and childbirth. Preventive measures have greatly reduced this cause of female mortality, and women now live longer than men. For babies born in the United States in 2018, for example, the estimated life expectancy at birth was 80.1 years. Males had a life expectancy of 77.8 years as compared with 82.3 years for females (*CIA World Factbook*, 2019a). Even from the beginning of life, women have a slight biological advantage over males: Females have lower mortality rates than males in the prenatal stage and the first month of life. Although 105 boys are born for every 100 girls, boys are more likely to be born prematurely and to have neonatal conditions that affect them. Boys are also more likely to die before their first birthday than girls.

Do you think gender roles and gender socialization might also contribute to differences in life expectancy? Yes, the kinds of work that men perform and societal pressures about what it means to be a “man” or a “woman” may contribute to differences in life expectancy by gender. Traditionally, more men have been employed in dangerous



FIGURE 14.3 Occupation and life expectancy may be related. Men are overrepresented in high-risk jobs, such as construction, that may affect their life expectancies.

occupations such as commercial fishing, mining, construction, and public safety/firefighting (■ Figure 14.3). As a result of gender roles and socialization, males may be more likely than females to engage in risky behavior such as drinking alcohol, smoking cigarettes (there is more social pressure on women not to smoke), using drugs, driving dangerously, and engaging in fights. Finally, women are more likely to use the health care system, with the result that health problems are identified and treated earlier (while there is a better chance of a successful outcome), whereas many men are more reluctant to consult doctors.

Because women on average live longer—have longer life expectancy at every age—than men, it is easy to jump to the conclusion that women are healthier than men. However, although men at all ages have higher rates of fatal diseases, women have higher rates of chronic illness and are more likely to extensively use health care services throughout their life.

Race/Ethnicity and Social Class Racial-ethnic differences are also visible in statistics pertaining to life expectancy. Not taking into account differences in education levels or other important variables, life expectancy for African American males is estimated at 71.9 years as compared to 79.1 for Latino (Hispanic) males and 76.1 for white (non-Hispanic) males. For African American females, life expectancy is 78.5 years as compared to 84.3 for Hispanic females and 81.2 for white (non-Hispanic females).

Although race/ethnicity and social class are related to issues of health and mortality, research continues to show that income and the neighborhood in which a person lives may be equally or more significant than race or ethnicity with respect to these issues (■ Figure 14.4). How is it possible that the neighborhood you live in may significantly affect your risk of dying during the next year? Numerous studies have found that people have a higher survival rate



Mike Koloff/Still Pictures/The Image Works

FIGURE 14.4 Can your neighborhood be bad for your health? According to recent research, it can indeed, especially if it predominantly contains fast-food restaurants, liquor stores, and similarly unhealthy lifestyle options.

if they live in better-educated or wealthier neighborhoods than if the neighborhood is low income and has low levels of education. Among the reasons that researchers believe that neighborhoods make a difference are the availability (or lack thereof) of safe areas to exercise, grocery stores with nutritious foods, and access to transportation, education, and good jobs. Many low-income neighborhoods are characterized by food deserts (urban areas where it is difficult to purchase affordable, good-quality fresh foods such as fruits and vegetables) or convenience store food and fast-food restaurants only, numerous liquor stores, and other facilities that do not provide residents with healthy options.

As discussed in prior chapters, people of color are more likely to have incomes below the poverty line, and the poorest people typically receive less preventive care and less-optimal management of chronic diseases than do other people. People living in central cities, where there are high levels of poverty and higher rates of crime, or in remote rural areas generally have greater difficulty in getting health care because most doctors prefer to locate their practice in a “safe” area, particularly one with a patient base that will produce a high income for the physician. Although rural Americans make up 19.3 percent of the U.S. population, only about 10–12 percent of the nation’s primary care physicians are practicing in rural areas, and fewer specialists such as cardiologists are available in these areas.

Another factor is occupation. People with lower incomes are more likely to be employed in jobs that expose them to danger and illness—working in the construction industry or around heavy equipment in a factory, for example, or holding a job as a convenience store clerk or other

positions that expose a person to the risk of violence, armed robbery, or homicide. Finally, people of color and poor people are more likely to live in areas that contain environmental hazards.

However, although Hispanics (Latinx) are more likely than non-Hispanic whites to live below the poverty line, they have lower death rates from heart disease, cancer, accidents, and suicide and they have a higher life expectancy. One explanation may be dietary factors and the strong family life and support networks found in many Latinx families and Hispanic-dominated neighborhoods and communities. Obviously, more research is needed on this point, for the answer might be beneficial to all people.

Health Effects of Disasters

When we hear about disease or impairment, most of us think about health problems associated with acute or chronic conditions, ranging from colds and flu to diabetes and coronary disease. However, disasters also have a detrimental effect on people’s health and well-being, and they also contribute to higher rates of disability and mortality. The WHO defines a *disaster* as a “sudden ecological phenomenon of sufficient magnitude to require external assistance” (Goolsby, 2011). This statement means that a disruption of such magnitude has occurred that the community, state, or nation is unable to return to a normal condition following the event without outside assistance.

Disasters are commonly classified as natural or technological (human-made). Natural disasters include tornadoes, earthquakes, hurricanes, floods, volcano eruptions, tsunamis, and other potentially lethal conditions that originate in nature. By contrast, technological disasters include toxic spills, fires, and nuclear crises. Such a technological disaster occurred in West, Texas, when a fire in a fertilizer plant produced a massive explosion, resulting in the loss of fifteen lives, injuries to more than two hundred

chronic diseases

illnesses that are long term or lifelong and that develop gradually or are present from birth.

acute diseases

illnesses that strike suddenly and cause dramatic incapacitation and sometimes death.

SOCIOLOGY in Global Perspective

Medical Crises and Response in the Aftermath of Natural Disasters

- March 2019: Typhoon Idai kills more than 900 in Africa
- July 2019: Japan heat wave claims more than 160 lives
- June 2019: India has heat wave that kills 90
- October 2019: Typhoon Hagibis kills more than 86 in Japan
- August 2019: Typhoon Lekima kills 172 in China
- Between 2010 and mid-2019, 5,200 people were killed in national disasters in the United States

Although some of these horrendous natural disasters occurred thousands of miles away from each other, cities and nations around the world have had similar problems: how to take care of sick and injured patients quickly and effectively in the aftermath of deadly natural disasters. Natural disasters leave devastation in their path. Many hundreds of persons die and thousands more are injured or missing. Shortages of water, food, clothing, shelter, and medicine further contribute to the hardship that many people experience.

Given the horrific nature of major disasters such as these, what kind of national and global planning should be done to provide the best possible medical care for people? This question deserves careful consideration because of the impact of global climate change and the corresponding increase in the numbers and intensity of natural disasters in recent years. In the United States alone, 355 people were killed in tropical cyclones, wildfires, heat waves, droughts,

severe thunderstorms, floods and flash floods, winter storms, and cold waves.

A number of organizations are leading the drive for more effective disaster risk management for health-related concerns. Among these disaster relief organizations are All Hands Volunteers, Direct Relief International, World Vision, REACT International, American Red Cross, Salvation Army, and UNICEF (Galaxydigital.com, 2020). Many other organizations also have come to the aid of natural disaster victims. Disaster-related injuries, diseases, deaths, disabilities, and psychosocial problems can be avoided or reduced by effective disaster risk management. Unlike traditional approaches of the health sector that respond to emergencies only after they happen, disaster risk management offers a proactive approach that emphasizes prevention, or at least reduction, of the problem. Although many factors go into creating a health-related risk-management plan, here are a few priorities:

1. Provide direction and support for disaster risk management at all levels, particularly local communities.
2. Assess potential risks to health and health systems, particularly from biological, natural, and technological sources, to enable early detection and warning to prompt action by the public and health workers.
3. Identify individuals, populations, infrastructure, and other community elements that are most vulnerable to harm in disasters and their aftermath (examples include young children, people over age sixty-five, low-income persons, individuals with chronic illness or disability, and those who are socially isolated).
4. Evaluate the system's capacity to manage health risks when responding to, or recovering from, a major disaster.

Although these priorities are abstract, identifying them is the first step in disaster preparedness. It is important to manage health risks so that fewer lives will be lost and fewer injuries sustained in natural and technological disasters that are both hazardous to and frightening for all of us.



STR/AFP/Getty Images

Major disasters such as the tornadoes, floods, and fires that continue to create havoc across the United States, as well the damage shown here as a result of a typhoon in China, produce massive medical crises for health care workers and hospitals. Many injured patients, whom rescue workers have often dug from the rubble, must be quickly transported to medical facilities where they can receive life-saving treatment.

Reflect & Analyze

How do inequality and poverty contribute to some people's vulnerability in a major disaster? Can physicians and other health care providers become better prepared for disasters? How might they accomplish this goal?

other people, and many millions of dollars in damages to the surrounding area. In some ways an event such as this has commonalities with terrorist attacks and war, which also have a devastating effect on human life because of the potential for mass casualties and the physical and psychological trauma that follows such events.

Both physical and mental health effects from disasters are important concerns. The risk of physical injury during and after natural and technological disasters is high. Individuals who sustain wound injuries are at a high risk for tetanus, a serious, often fatal toxic condition. However, this condition is virtually 100 percent preventable with the appropriate vaccination. Similarly, infection is a potential problem with any wound or rash sustained in a disaster. For this reason, organizations such as the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention issue guidelines for health care professionals so that they will be aware of special precautions that are needed for emergency wound management. Often, the effects of disasters on mental health are not known for some period of time. The stress and trauma of survivors and those who are seriously injured may linger for extended periods. In fact, some medical specialists compare the psychological effects of being a survivor of a deadly disaster such as an earthquake, tornado, hurricane, or terrorist attack to the anxiety or posttraumatic stress disorders exhibited by some wartime combat survivors.

How does treatment differ in disasters as compared to medical emergencies? Emergency medical services typically provide *maximal resources* to a *small number* of people, while disaster medical services are designed to direct *limited resources* to the *greater number* of individuals. Although most of us do not like to think about these issues in regard to health and illness, in the United States and around the world a disaster occurs somewhere almost daily, and some of these are of sufficient magnitude that individuals and nations are devastated for extended periods of time. For this reason, social epidemiologists have intensified research on this phenomenon, and the WHO has created plans for disaster risk management for health (see this chapter's "Sociology in Global Perspective" box).

Lifestyle Factors

As noted previously, social epidemiologists also examine lifestyle choices as a factor in health, disease, and impairment. We examine three lifestyle factors as they relate to health: drugs, sexually transmitted diseases, and diet and exercise.

Drug Use and Abuse What is a drug? There are many different definitions, but for our purposes a **drug** is any substance—other than food and water—that, when taken into the body, alters its functioning in some way. Drugs are used for either therapeutic or recreational purposes. *Therapeutic* use occurs when a person takes a drug for a specific purpose such as reducing a fever or controlling a cough. In contrast, *recreational* drug use occurs when a

person takes a drug for no purpose other than achieving a pleasurable feeling or psychological state. Alcohol and tobacco are examples of drugs that are primarily used for recreational purposes; their use by people over a fixed age (which varies from time to time and place to place) is lawful. Other drugs—such as some antianxiety drugs or tranquilizers—may be used legally only if prescribed by a physician for therapeutic use, but these drugs are frequently used illegally for recreational purposes.

Alcohol The use of alcohol is considered an accepted part of the culture in the United States. According to the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA; 2019), 86.3 percent of people who are eighteen years of age or older reported that they drank alcohol at some point in their lifetime; 70 percent reported that they drank in the past year; and 55 percent reported that they drank in the past month.

Age, gender, and race are factors in regard to drinking behavior. Men tend to drink more than women and are more likely to drink beer, while women are more likely to drink wine. Younger men between the ages of eighteen and forty-nine are the heaviest drinkers. White Americans are more likely to drink than African Americans and Latinx (Hispanic Americans). When white Americans drink, they typically consume more alcohol than do nonwhite Americans.

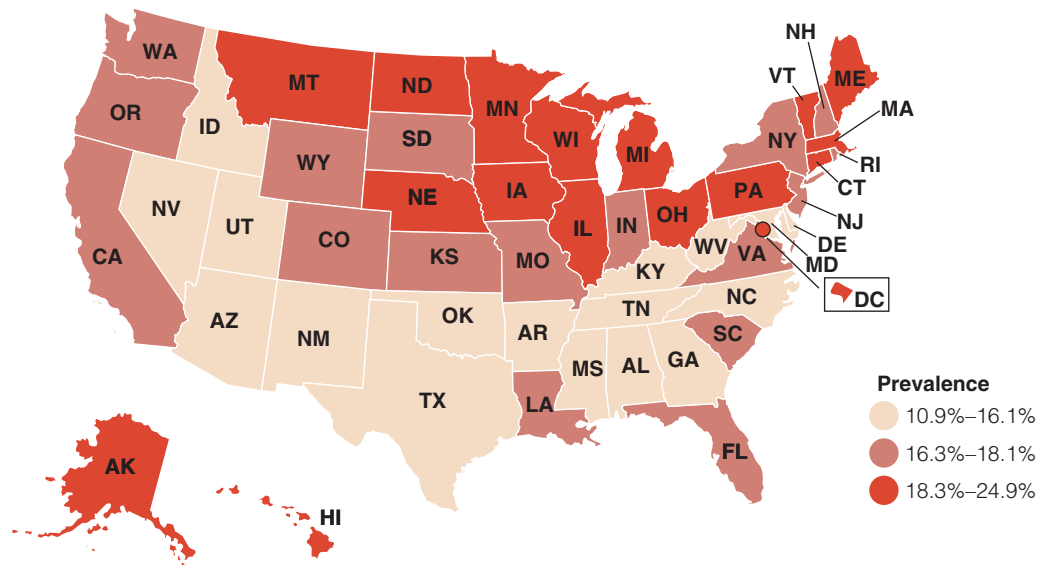
Is alcohol consumption a problem? Even short-term alcohol use may have negative effects, including motor-vehicle crashes, violence against others, sexual aggression, spread of HIV and sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), unplanned pregnancy, and binge drinking and the risky behavior associated with such activity. *Binge drinking* is defined as a pattern of drinking that brings blood alcohol concentration levels to 0.08 or more. This condition typically occurs after four drinks for women and five drinks for men are consumed in about a two-hour period of time. More than 38 million U.S. adults engage in binge drinking, but the extent of binge drinking varies from state to state (see ■ Figure 14.5). The largest number of drinks consumed within a short period of time among binge-drinkers varies by state, as shown on the map in ■ Figure 14.6.

Binge drinking is especially problematic because it can lead to death from alcohol poisoning. According to a study by the NIAAA (2019), approximately 88,000 people die from alcohol-related causes each year, making alcohol the third leading preventable cause of death in the United States. One in ten deaths among working-age adults age 20–64 have been attributed to excessive alcohol use, and more than half of these deaths were due to binge drinking.

One of the major problems regarding alcohol abuse is the prevalence of underage drinking. According to a 2018 study, about 4.3 million people between the ages of twelve and twenty reported that they had engaged in binge drinking

drug

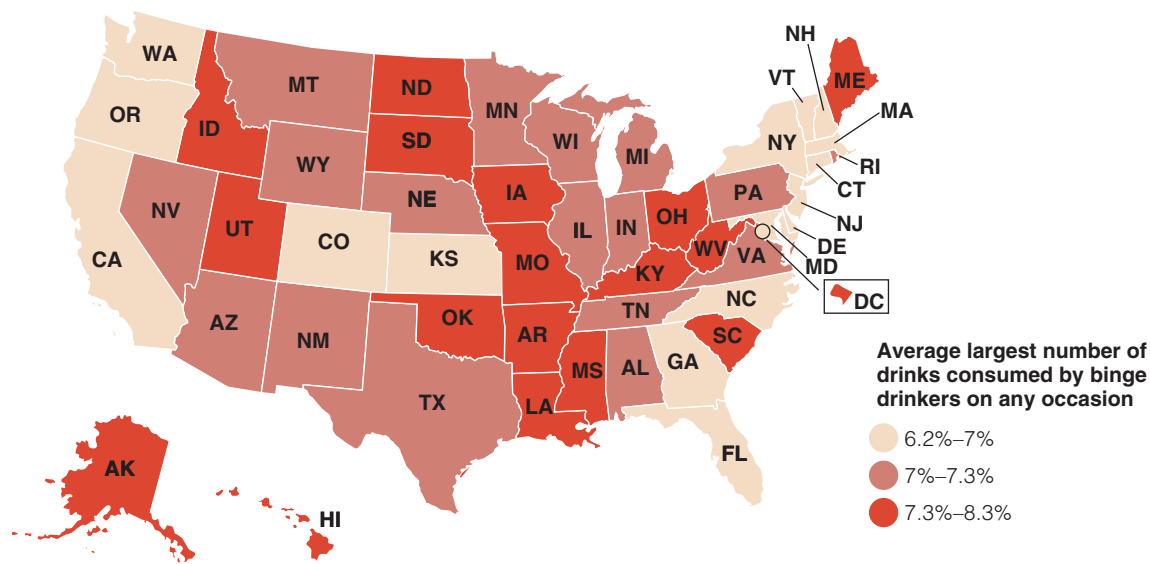
any substance—other than food and water—that, when taken into the body, alters its functioning in some way.



Note: Age-adjusted to the 2000 US Census standard population. Binge drinking is defined as 4 or more drinks for a woman or 5 or more drinks for a man on an occasion during the past 30 days.

FIGURE 14.5 Percentage of Adults Who Binge Drink

Source: U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2018b.



Note: Age-adjusted to the 2000 U.S. Census standard population. Binge drinking is defined as four or more drinks for a woman or five or more drinks for a man on an occasion during the past thirty days. Intensity is defined as the average largest number of drinks consumed by binge drinkers on any occasion in the past 30 days.

FIGURE 14.6 Average Largest Number of Drinks Consumed by Binge Drinkers on a Single Occasion

Source: U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2018a.

during the past months. Among college students there has also been a dramatic increase in alcohol use and abuse documented in recent decades. For example, nearly 37 percent of college students between the ages of eighteen and twenty-two reported that they had engaged in binge drinking in the month prior to the survey. Sadly, more than 1,800 college students between the ages of 18 and 24 die from alcohol-related unintentional injuries, including motor-vehicle crashes. Physical assault, sexual assault, and date

rape are often alcohol related as well. Even for students who do not experience such dire consequences, drinking alcohol has been linked to poor academic performance, including missing classes, falling behind in school assignments, doing poorly on exams or papers, and receiving lower grades overall (NIAAA, 2019).

Many long-term problems are associated with alcohol consumption as well. Chronic heavy drinking or alcoholism can cause permanent damage to the brain or other parts of

the body. For alcoholics, the long-term negative health effects include *nutritional deficiencies* resulting from poor eating habits (chronic heavy drinking contributes to high caloric consumption but low nutritional intake); *cardiovascular problems* such as inflammation and enlargement of the heart muscle, high blood pressure, and stroke; and eventually *alcoholic cirrhosis*—a progressive development of scar tissue that chokes off blood vessels in the liver and destroys liver cells by interfering with their use of oxygen. The social consequences of heavy drinking are not always limited to the person doing the drinking. For example, abuse of alcohol and other drugs by a pregnant woman can damage her unborn fetus.

Can alcoholism be overcome? Many people get and stay sober. Some rely on organizations such as Alcoholics Anonymous or church support groups to help them overcome their drinking problem. Others undergo medical treatment and therapy sessions to learn more about the root causes of their problem.

Nicotine (Tobacco) According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC; 2019g), tobacco use is the single largest preventable cause of death and disease in the United States. More than 480,000 people in this country die each year as a result of cigarette smoking, and more than 41,000 of these deaths are related to exposure to secondhand smoke. Even people who never light up a cigarette can be harmed by *secondhand* or *environmental tobacco smoke*—the smoke in the air inhaled by nonsmokers as a result of other people's tobacco smoking and the residue of smoke on such items as garments and furniture. People are exposed to secondhand smoke from burning cigarettes, cigars, and pipes. Often this smoke has been exhaled, or breathed out, by individuals who are smoking.

According to the CDC (2019g), for every person who dies of smoking, at least thirty people live with a serious smoking-related illness. The nicotine in tobacco is a toxic, dependency-producing psychoactive drug that is more addictive than heroin. It is classified as a stimulant because it stimulates central nervous system receptors and activates them to release adrenaline, which raises blood pressure, speeds up the heart rate, and gives the user a temporary sense of alertness. Although the overall proportion of smokers in the general population has declined somewhat since the Surgeon General's warning in 1964 that smoking causes cancer and other serious diseases, about 34.2 million people (nearly 14 percent of all U.S. adults age eighteen years or older) were current cigarette smokers in 2018.

Research has also found that thousands of young people start smoking cigarettes or e-cigarettes (vaping) every day. It is estimated that about two thousand people under age eighteen smoke their first cigarette each day, and more than three hundred of them become

daily cigarette smokers. Although laws were passed in 2019 to prevent tobacco manufacturers from flavoring some tobacco products to attract young users, many adolescents still engage in some form of tobacco use. Data from the CDC (2019g) indicate the following tobacco product use among high school students: 31.2 percent indicated use of any tobacco product, 27.5 percent indicated use of e-cigarettes, 7.6 percent used cigars, 5.8 percent used cigarettes, 4.8 percent used smokeless tobacco, 3.4 percent used hookah, and 1.1 percent used pipe tobacco. In sum, by 2019, about 12 of every 100 middle school students and about 31 of every 100 high school students reported current use of a tobacco product, and many young people use two or more tobacco products.

According to the CDC (2019g), although progress has been made in regard to reducing deaths, illness, and disability related to tobacco use, we still have a long way to go to successfully curb this major cause of illness and death in the United States.

Illegal Drugs In the United States, marijuana has been the most extensively used illegal drug for many years, but more recently a number of states have changed their laws in regard to use of the drug. Some states have legalized marijuana for recreational use. At the time of this writing in January 2020, these states were Alaska, California, Colorado, Illinois, Maine, Massachusetts, Michigan, Nevada, Oregon, Vermont, Washington, and the District of Columbia. About thirty-three states have approved a comprehensive medical marijuana/cannabis program that is geared for dealing with such conditions as pain relief associated with cancer and multiple sclerosis, control of nausea and vomiting, and numerous other potential therapeutic uses for the drug (National Conference of State Legislatures, 2020) (■ Figure 14.7).



FIGURE 14.7 Although this is an unfamiliar sight throughout most of the United States, customers at The Clinic in Denver, Colorado, are able to legally purchase marijuana for recreational purposes as a result of the passage of Colorado Amendment 64, which allowed for the commercial sale of cannabis to the general public at licensed establishments.

Marijuana refers to the dried leaves, flowers, stems, and seeds from the hemp plant known as *Cannabis sativa*. This plant contains THC, a mind-altering chemical, and other related compounds. Because THC passes from the lungs into the bloodstream, the body absorbs THC more quickly than if a person eats or drinks it. Marijuana has both short- and long-term effects on the brain and other organs throughout the body. Marijuana overactivates parts of the brain, causing a feeling of being “high.” However, it also produces other short-term effects, such as altered senses such as how colors look, a distorted sense of time, changes in mood, impaired body movement, difficulty in thinking and problem solving, and impaired memory. This can be particularly dangerous for individuals driving motor vehicles or who are engaged in other activities that require an accurate sense of timing and good judgment. Long-term effects of marijuana use are particularly harmful for persons who begin using the drug as teenagers, when it may affect brain development and contribute to problems such as reduced thinking, memory, and learning functions. Both short- and long-term users may experience adverse physical effects, such as breathing problems, increased heart rate, problems with child development during and after pregnancy, and mental health problems.

The use of marijuana has grown exponentially among young people in the nation’s middle and high schools. Researchers in one study found that a high rate of marijuana use by eighth-, tenth-, and twelfth-grade students, combined with a drop in perceptions about the potential harm of such drug use, had contributed to regular or daily use of marijuana by more young people. Some young people who used marijuana heavily before age eighteen (when the brain is still developing) and quit taking it showed impaired mental abilities even after they no longer took the drug.

High doses of marijuana smoked during pregnancy can disrupt the development of the fetus and result in congenital abnormalities and neurological disturbances. Furthermore, some studies have found an increased risk of cancer and other lung problems associated with marijuana because its smokers are believed to inhale more deeply than tobacco users do.

Another widely used illegal drug is cocaine. Cocaine may be either inhaled, injected intravenously, or smoked (“crack cocaine”). According to the National Institute on Drug Abuse, over five million Americans ages twelve and older have used cocaine, and one million have used crack at least once. People who use cocaine over extended periods of time have higher rates of infection, heart problems, internal bleeding, hypertension, stroke, and other neurological and cardiovascular disorders than do nonusers. Intravenous cocaine users who share contaminated needles are also at risk for contracting HIV.

Each of the drugs discussed here represents a lifestyle choice that affects health. Whereas age, race/ethnicity, sex, and—at least to some degree—social class are ascribed characteristics, taking drugs is a voluntary action on a person’s part.

Sexually Transmitted Diseases The circumstances under which a person engages in sexual activity constitute another lifestyle choice with health implications. Although most people find consensual sexual activity enjoyable, it can result in transmission of certain *sexually transmitted diseases (STDs)*, including HIV/AIDS, chlamydia, gonorrhea, and syphilis. The latest estimates from the CDC (2019f) show that there are about 20 million new STD infections in the United States each year. These new infections alone cost the health care system nearly \$16 billion in direct medical costs.

Prior to 1960, the incidence of STDs in this country had been reduced sharply by barrier-type contraceptives (e.g., condoms) and the use of penicillin as a cure. However, in the 1960s and 1970s the number of cases of STDs increased rapidly with the introduction of the birth control pill, which led to women having more sexual partners and couples being less likely to use barrier contraceptives. Since that time, many people have become more aware of STDs, and organizations such as the CDC have mounted aggressive public service campaigns to make individuals aware of choices that contribute to sexual health.

Chlamydia Chlamydia is the most common STD in terms of the number of cases (more than 1.7 million) reported annually to the CDC (2019f). Almost two-thirds of all reported chlamydia cases were among persons age 15–24 years. However, the CDC estimates that more than half of new cases remain undiagnosed and unreported each year. This is an issue of great concern because for women, chlamydial infections, which usually have no symptoms, can result in pelvic inflammatory disease (PID)—a major cause of infertility, ectopic pregnancy, and chronic pelvic pain. Like other STDs, chlamydia can also contribute to the transmission of HIV. Women are at higher risk of chlamydia, as shown in ■ Figure 14.8.

Gonorrhea Gonorrhea, the second most commonly reported STD in the United States, is caused by a bacterium that can grow and multiply easily in the warm, moist areas of the reproductive tract. It can also grow in the mouth, throat, eyes, and anus. Untreated gonorrhea may lead to serious outcomes such as tubal infertility, ectopic pregnancy, and chronic pelvic pain. Gonorrhea can help in the transmission of HIV infection, and in advanced cases it can spread to the blood or joints and be life-threatening.

In 2018, about 583,405 cases of gonorrhea were reported to the CDC, making it the second most common notifiable condition in the United States. Cases of reported gonorrhea have increased by nearly 83 percent since an all-time low in 2009. The rate of reported gonorrhea is higher among men compared to women. This disease is difficult to control because it quickly develops resistance to antibiotics that are used to treat the infection. For example, in 2018, more than half of all the infections were estimated to be resistant to at least one antibiotic.

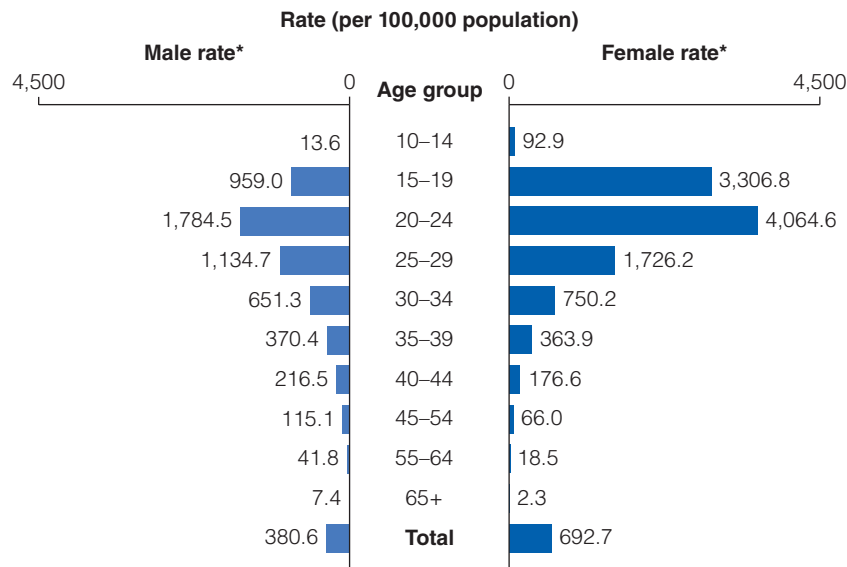


FIGURE 14.8 Chlamydia—Rates of Reported Cases by Age Group and Sex, United States, 2018

Source: U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2019d.

Syphilis Syphilis is a genital ulcerative disease that can be acquired not only by sexual intercourse but also by kissing or coming into intimate bodily contact with an infected person. Untreated early syphilis in pregnant women can result in perinatal death or may lead to infection of the fetus if syphilis was acquired during the four years prior to the pregnancy (CDC, 2019f). Untreated syphilis can, over time, cause cardiovascular problems, brain damage, and even death. Penicillin can cure many cases of syphilis as long as the disease has not spread.

In 2018, 115,045 cases of all stages of syphilis were reported, including 35,063 primary and secondary syphilis, the most infectious stages of the disease. Rates have increased among both women and men in all regions of the United States, and among all racial-ethnic groups (CDC, 2019f).

AIDS AIDS (acquired immunodeficiency syndrome), which is caused by HIV (human immunodeficiency virus), is among the most significant health problems that this nation—and the world—faces today. Although AIDS almost inevitably ends in death, no one actually dies *of* AIDS. Rather, AIDS reduces the body's ability to fight disease, making a person vulnerable to many diseases—such as pneumonia—that result in death.

AIDS was first identified in 1981, and the total number of AIDS-related deaths in the United States through 1985 was only 12,493; however, the numbers rose rapidly after that. In recent years the CDC has developed new estimates of HIV prevalence. Current estimates suggest that nearly 38 million people in the United States are living with HIV infection, and about 8.1 million are not aware that they are infected. The majority of new HIV infections are attributed to male-to-male sexual behavior, intravenous drug use, sex workers, and transgender people (UNAIDS, 2019).

Both in the United States and world-wide, HIV/AIDS remains a major health problem, but progress has been made in addressing this epidemic. New infections among children have declined in the 2000s as HIV-positive mothers have become more aware that they can pass this disease on during pregnancy, childbirth, or breastfeeding.

Over the past three decades, global efforts have been increased to reduce the HIV/AIDS epidemic. More people are receiving antiretroviral therapy (ART), which is a combination of at least three antiretroviral (ARV) drugs to maximally suppress the HIV virus and stop the progression of the disease. In June 2019, about 24.5 million people diagnosed with HIV were currently receiving this therapy. Massive reductions in rates of death and suffering have occurred when the ART regimen is used, particularly in early stages of the disease. ART is also used for the prevention of HIV infection, particularly among pregnant women, children, and other high-risk populations.

The number of AIDS-related deaths has been reduced by more than 56 percent since 2004. However, worldwide, around 770,000 people died from AIDS-related illnesses in 2018 (UNAIDS, 2019); so much remains to be done to eradicate HIV and AIDS.

Staying Healthy: Diet and Exercise Up to this point we have primarily been looking at problematic aspects of lifestyle that have a negative effect on health; however, lifestyle choices also include positive actions such as a healthy diet and regular exercise. Over the past several decades, a dramatic improvement in our understanding of food and diet has taken place, and many people in the United States have begun to improve their dietary habits. A significant portion of the population now eats larger amounts of vegetables, fruits, and cereals, substituting unsaturated fats and oils for saturated fats. However, many people in the United States still eat diets that are deficient in fruits and vegetables, and their meals contain more fats and added sugars than are recommended by current dietary guidelines. Eating behavior such as this contributes to obesity, which may shorten the average U.S. life expectancy by two to five years. All states and territories had more than 20 percent of adults with obesity, and some states had a higher percentage of adults with obesity than others. ■ Figure 14.9 shows obesity rates for adults across the United States.

Obesity increases the risk of health problems such as hypertension, type 2 diabetes, and certain types of cancer. It is estimated that more than one-third of all U.S. adults are obese and that many others are overweight. One of the important ways to reduce obesity is through exercise. Regular exercise (at least three times a week) keeps the heart, lungs, muscles, and bones in good health and slows the aging process.

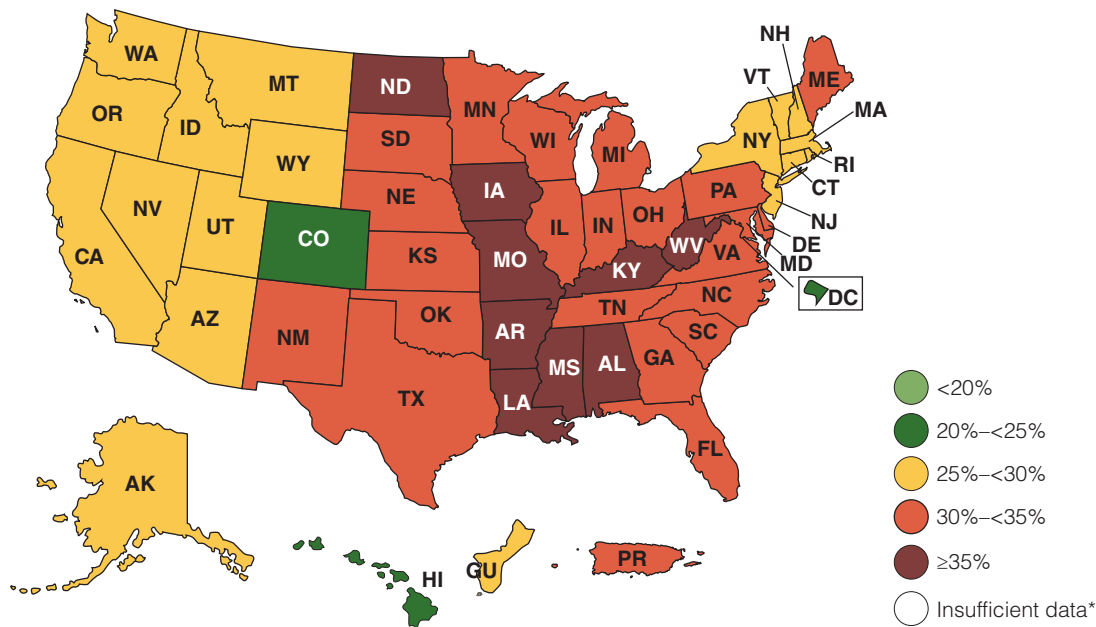


FIGURE 14.9 Prevalence of Self-Reported Adult Obesity in the United States, 2018

Source: U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2019a.

Health Care in the United States

Understanding health care as it exists in the United States today requires a brief examination of its history. During the nineteenth century, people became doctors in this country through apprenticeships, purchasing a mail-order diploma, completing high school and attending a series of lectures, or obtaining bachelor's and medical degrees and studying abroad for a number of years. At that time, medical schools were largely proprietary institutions, and their officials were often more interested in acquiring students than in enforcing standards. The state licensing boards established to improve medical training and stop the proliferation of "irregular" practitioners failed to slow the growth of medical schools, and their number increased from 90 in 1880 to 160 in 1906. Medical school graduates were largely poor and frustrated because of the overabundance of doctors and quasi-medical practitioners, so doctors became highly competitive and anxious to limit the number of new practitioners. The obvious way to accomplish this was to reduce the number of medical schools and set up licensing laws to eliminate unqualified or irregular practitioners (Kendall, 1980).

The Rise of Scientific Medicine and Professionalism

Although medicine had been previously viewed more as an art than as a science, several significant discoveries during the nineteenth century in areas such as bacteriology and anesthesiology began to give medicine increasing credibility as a science. At the same time that these discoveries were occurring, the ideology of science was being

advocated in all areas of life, and people came to believe that almost any task could be done better if the appropriate scientific methods were used. To make medicine in the United States more scientific (and more profitable), the Carnegie Foundation (at the request of the American Medical Association and the forerunner of the Association of American Medical Colleges) commissioned an official study of medical education. The "Flexner report" that resulted from this study has been described as the catalyst of modern medical education but has also been criticized for its lack of objectivity.

The Flexner Report To conduct his study, Abraham Flexner met with the leading faculty at the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine to develop a model of how medical education should take place; he next visited each of the 155 medical schools then in existence, comparing them with the model. Included in the model was the belief that a medical school should be a full-time, research-oriented, laboratory facility that devoted all of its energies to teaching and research, not to the practice of medicine (Kendall, 1980). It should employ "laboratory men" to train students in the "science" of medicine, and the students should then apply the principles they had learned in the sciences to the illnesses of patients (Brown, 1979). Only a few of the schools Flexner visited were deemed to be equipped to teach scientific medicine; nonetheless, his model became the standard for the profession.

As a result of the Flexner (1910) report, all but two of the African American medical schools then in existence were closed, and only one of the medical schools for women survived. As a result, white women and people of color were largely excluded from medical education for



the first half of the twentieth century. Until the civil rights movement and the women's movement of the 1960s and 1970s, virtually all physicians were white, male, and upper or upper-middle class.

The Professionalization of Medicine Despite its adverse effect on people of color and women who might desire a career in medicine, the Flexner report did help *professionalize* medicine (■ Figure 14.10). When we compare post-Flexner medicine with the characteristics of professions, we find that it meets those characteristics:

1. *Abstract, specialized knowledge.* Physicians undergo a rigorous education that results in a theoretical understanding of health, illness, and medicine. This education provides them with the credentials, skills, and training associated with being a professional.
2. *Autonomy.* Physicians are autonomous and (except as discussed subsequently in this chapter) rely on their own judgment in selecting the appropriate technique for dealing with a problem. They expect patients to respect that autonomy.
3. *Self-regulation.* Theoretically, physicians are self-regulating. They have licensing, accreditation, and regulatory boards and associations that set professional standards and require members to adhere to a code of ethics as a form of public accountability.



John Birdsall/AGE Fotostock

FIGURE 14.10 A sight similar to the one on the left might have greeted Abraham Flexner as he prepared his report on medical education in the United States: students observing while their professor demonstrates surgical techniques. And although today's health care facilities look very different, many of the same teaching techniques are still employed.

4. *Authority.* Because of their authority, physicians expect compliance with their directions and advice. They do not expect clients to argue about the advice rendered (or the price to be charged).
5. *Altruism.* Physicians perform a valuable service for society rather than acting solely in their own self-interest. Many physicians go beyond their self-interest or personal comfort so that they can help a patient.

However, with professionalization, licensed medical doctors gained control over the entire medical establishment, a situation that has continued until the present and—despite current efforts at cost control by insurance companies and others—may continue into the future.

Medicine Today

Throughout its history in the United States, medical care has been on a *fee-for-service* basis: Patients have been billed individually for each service they receive, including treatment by doctors, laboratory work, hospital visits, prescriptions, and other health-related expenses. Fee for service is an expensive way to deliver health care because there are few restrictions on the fees charged by doctors, hospitals, and other medical providers.

There are both good and bad sides to the fee-for-service approach. The good side is that in the “true spirit” of capitalism, coupled with the hard work and scholarship of many people, this approach has resulted in remarkable advances in medicine. The bad side of fee-for-service medicine is its inequality of distribution. In effect, the United States has a two-tier system of medical care. For the most part, those who can afford it are able to get good medical treatment and comfortable surroundings. However, top-tier medical care is not within the budget of many people. The annual cost of health care per person in the United States rose

from \$141 in 1960 to \$11,172 per person in 2018 (CMS.gov, 2019). (■ Figure 14.11 reflects how expenditures for health care have increased from 1993 until 2018.) It is estimated that total health care expenditures in 2018 amounted to more than \$3.6 trillion. This was a 4.6 percent increase over 2017, when health care spending increased by 4.2 percent. Although about 90.6 percent of the U.S. population had some type of insurance in 2018, about 30.7 million persons were still uninsured in that year. Keeping in mind the issues that have been raised throughout this text regarding income disparity in the United States, the questions to be considered at this point are who pays for medical care and what about the people who simply cannot afford adequate medical care.

Paying for Medical Care in the United States

Until recently, the United States was the only high-income nation without some form of universal health coverage for all citizens. In 2010, the U.S. Congress passed the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, a sweeping health care reform bill that was supposed to gradually bring about important changes in how health care is funded. Let's look first at the health reform legislation and then compare its

provisions with previous and current methods of funding health care in the United States. We then look at what has been appended to this important legislation in the early years of the Trump administration beginning in 2017.

The Affordable Care Act (ACA) of 2010 After a lengthy struggle in the U.S. Congress, the Affordable Care Act was signed into law in 2010. One of the central tenets in the law was the creation of a new insurance marketplace that made it possible for individuals and families without coverage and small business owners to pool their resources to increase their buying power in order to make health insurance more affordable (■ Figure 14.12). Private insurance companies would compete for their business based on cost and quality. Advocates of the law believed that it might be a first step in curbing abuses in the insurance industry.

Health care reform was originally scheduled to occur in the following stages:

- **2010:** Adults who had been unable to get coverage because of a preexisting condition could join a high-risk insurance pool until the competitive health insurance marketplace began in 2014. Insurance companies would now have to cover children with

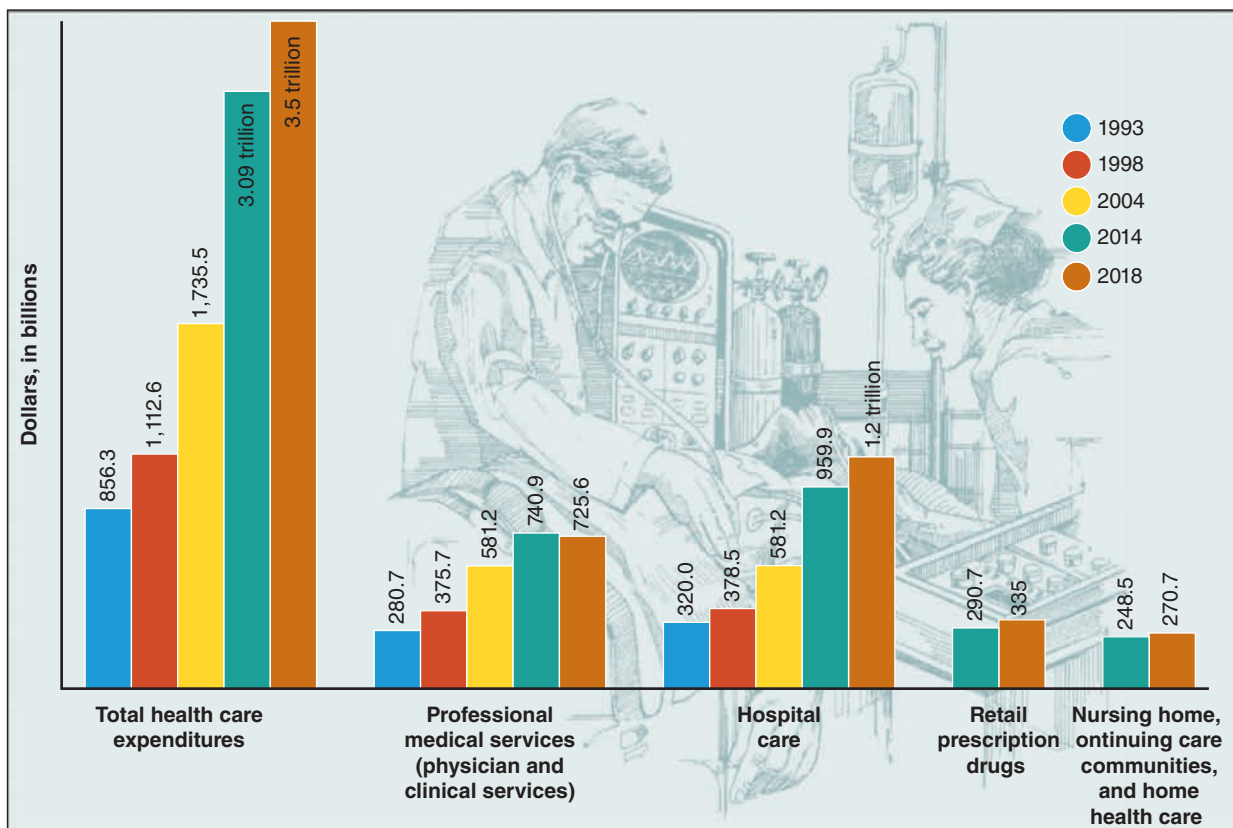


FIGURE 14.11 Increase in Cost of Health Care, 1993–2018*

*Note: Categories do not add up to Total health care expenditures because some services, such as dental care, other professional services, durable medical equipment, and non-durable products are not included in the chart.

Source: CMS.gov, "National Health Expenditures, 2018 Highlights," 2019.



FIGURE 14.12 Following passage of the Affordable Care Act, many people enrolled either in person or online for health insurance coverage. It was estimated in 2015 that “Obamacare” provided health insurance to nearly 17 million formerly uninsured people. However, the Affordable Care Act has undergone many challenges and may face additional ones from political leaders.

preexisting conditions. Policies could not be revoked when people got sick. Preventive services would be fully covered without co-pays or deductibles. Dependent children could remain on their parents’ insurance plans until they reached the age of twenty-six.

- **2011:** Medicare recipients would have access to free annual wellness visits with no cost for preventive care, and those recipients who had to pay out of pocket for prescription drugs would receive substantial discounts.
- **2012:** The federal government would provide additional money for primary-care services, and new incentives would be offered to encourage doctors to join together in accountability-care organizations. Hospitals with high readmission rates would face stiff penalties.
- **2013:** Households with incomes above \$250,000 would be subject to higher taxes to help pay for health care reform. Medicare would launch “payment bundling” so that hospitals, doctors, and other health care providers could be paid on the basis of patient outcome, not services provided.
- **2014:** Most people would be required to buy health insurance or pay a penalty for not having it. Insurance companies could not deny a policy to anyone based on health status, nor could they refuse to pay for treatment on the basis of preexisting health conditions. Annual limits on health care coverage would be abolished. Each state would have to open a health insurance exchange, or marketplace, so that individuals and small businesses without

coverage could comparatively shop for health packages. Tax credits would make insurance and health care more affordable for those who earned too much to qualify for Medicaid.

- **2018:** Insurance companies and plan administrators would pay a 40 percent excise tax on all family plans costing more than \$27,500 per year.
- **2019:** The health reform law should have reduced the number of uninsured people by 32 million, leaving about 23 million uninsured. About one-third of the uninsured would be immigrants residing in the country without legal documentation.

These were only a few of the highlights of the original plan, which is contained in a more than two-thousand-page document. Legal challenges began almost immediately. After a series of legal challenges and the appeal of a decision of the U.S. Court of Appeals of the Eleventh Circuit, in Atlanta, in 2012, the U.S. Supreme Court heard a challenge to the ACA

on the issue of whether Congress had overstepped its constitutional authority by requiring most people in the United States to purchase health insurance or be assessed a penalty. The Obama administration claimed that Congress was justified in this action by the constitutional power granted to this legislative body “to regulate commerce” and “to lay and collect taxes.” After extensive deliberations, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that Congress did not exceed its constitutional authority, and the ACA was further implemented following the court’s decision.

The next challenge to the Affordable Care Act came in 2015, when the U.S. Supreme Court heard *King v. Burwell*, a case that involved a specific section of the law that makes federal subsidies (tax credits) available for people who purchase insurance through exchanges set up by the state. Some states did set up their own exchanges, or marketplaces; however, other states opted to let the federal government set up the exchange rather than establishing their own. In *King v. Burwell*, the plaintiffs argued that the language of the law means that *only* people enrolled in the state-run marketplaces—but not those in federally run marketplaces—are eligible to get subsidies from the federal government. Across all fifty states, about 85 percent of insurance-marketplace customers were eligible for the subsidies based on their income. However, if the subsidies had been taken away for those who enrolled in federally established marketplaces, many people who had signed up for insurance under the ACA would have no longer been able to afford it. In a 6–3 ruling the Supreme Court upheld the health care law when a majority of the justices decided that the estimated 6.4 million people enrolled in federally established plans run by the Healthcare.gov marketplace were entitled to keep the tax subsidies that help them pay

their insurance premiums. This ruling was clearly a victory for the ACA and encouraged President Obama to state that “the Affordable Care Act is here to stay.”

However, this is not the end of the story pertaining to the Act: it is just the beginning. With the election of President Donald J. Trump in 2016, the ACA, or “Obamacare,” came under an immediate and sustained attack. On January 20, 2017, the same day that he was sworn into office, President Trump signed an executive order instructing administration officials “to waive, defer, grant exemptions from, or delay” implementing parts of the ACA until Congress could repeal and replace this health care law altogether (qtd. in Simmons-Duffin, 2019).

When efforts to abolish the ACA failed, the president and his administration began to take the law apart piece by piece. The following specific challenges occurred (Simmons-Duffin, 2019). First, the individual mandate requiring all U.S. residents to have health insurance or to pay a penalty (effectively a tax) was eliminated when the penalty was reduced to \$0. Previously the penalty had been upheld as constitutional by the U.S. Supreme Court because it essentially was defined as a tax. However, when the penalty became \$0, it could no longer be considered a tax and thus was unconstitutional. Elimination of the penalty also eliminated a major source of revenue for financing insurance through the ACA marketplaces. Insurance premiums went up about 32 percent on average, placing many of the plans out of reach of the average American.

Second, as the law was originally passed, Medicaid expansion by the states was central to the success of the ACA. Supposedly, states would vote to increase Medicaid eligibility and spending for more of their residents, and this would reduce the number of uninsured persons in that state. This expansion was based on the assumption that the federal government would help pay for states to expand their Medicaid programs. About thirty-seven states and the District of Columbia opted to expand Medicaid (and a few more states are considering it in early 2020), but many other states, such as Texas, that most needed the expanded coverage for their residents, refused to participate. This was a critical issue because most people nationwide who gained health care coverage through the ACA actually got their coverage by enrolling in Medicaid. However, some states did not participate at all, and others have continued their efforts to require Medicaid beneficiaries to be employed or in school for a specific number of hours per week. According to some Trump administration officials, work requirements help health care recipients gain control over their own expenditures and lives. By contrast, critics argue that these requirements are excessive and that they function as a roadblock from gaining the insurance coverage for many people who badly need it.

Third, in 2017, the Trump administration discontinued subsidy payments from the federal government that were supposed to motivate insurance companies to remain in the ACA insurance exchanges and keep premiums down. Fourth, short-term or “skinny” plans were implemented

by the Trump administration that supposedly were less expensive for people to pay for, but these plans typically did not have the same amount of coverage as the longer-term plans. For people with chronic illnesses, these plans did not cover many conditions that had required coverage under the initial ACA plans. It soon became apparent that life-threatening illnesses or serious accidents could quickly bankrupt a family insured with only a “skinny” plan. Finally, funding for HealthCare.gov sign-ups, which initially was the means by which people got advice about the different plans available to them and signed up under the ACA, was dramatically cut in the federal budget. Some states attempted to make up for these cuts at the federal level; others were unwilling or unable to take on this extra financial burden, particularly in states with the highest rates of poverty and lowest taxes and other resources for their social service programs (Simmons-Duffin, 2019).

At the time of this writing in early 2020, the Affordable Care Act remains in existence and is providing millions of people with health insurance coverage they otherwise might not possess. However, the future of the ACA is very much in question: The fate of this formidable government program is intertwined with such issues as the outcome of the 2020 presidential and Congressional elections, as well as the extent to which states, insurance companies, and potential customers either stand behind the existing program or demand radical changes in health care funding and operational procedures in the future.

To better understand how and why the Affordable Care Act has been so controversial in the United States, let’s look at how health insurance has been funded through private insurance, public insurance, health maintenance organizations, and managed care.

Private Health Insurance Private health insurance is largely paid for by businesses and households. Today, employer-sponsored insurance plans cover approximately 156 million persons below the age of sixty-five. Back in the 1960s, medical insurance programs began to expand, and third-party providers (public and private insurers) started picking up large portions of doctor and hospital bills for insured patients. With third-party fee-for-service payment, patients pay premiums into a fund that in turn pays doctors and hospitals for each treatment the patient receives.

Private health insurance premiums have continued to increase for both individuals and families. This means that health insurance from employers is often not free to the workers. The 2018 average annual premium for employer-sponsored health insurance was \$7,188 for individual coverage and \$20,575 for family coverage (Kaiser Family Foundation, 2019).

Over the years, some health care advocates have argued that a third-party fee-for-service approach is the best and most cost-efficient method of delivering medical care. Others have argued that fee for service is an outrageously expensive way in which to provide for the medical needs of people in this country, particularly those who are without health

insurance coverage. According to critics, third-party fee for service contributes greatly to medical inflation because it gives doctors and hospitals an incentive to increase medical services. In other words, the more services they provide, the more fees they charge, and the more money they make. Patients have no incentive to limit their visits to doctors or hospitals because they have already paid their premiums and feel entitled to medical care, regardless of the cost. This is one of the spiraling costs that advocates of health care reform hope will be reduced.

Public Health Insurance Since the 1960s, the United States has had two nationwide public health insurance programs, Medicare and Medicaid. In 1965 Congress enacted Medicare, a federal program for people ages sixty-five and over (who are covered by Social Security or railroad retirement insurance or who have been permanently and totally disabled for two years or more). This program was primarily funded through Social Security taxes paid by current workers. Medicare has several components, referred to as Part A, Part B, Part C, and Part D. Medicare Part A (hospital insurance) helps cover inpatient care in hospitals, skilled nursing facilities, hospice, and home health care. Part B (medical insurance) helps cover doctors' services and outpatient care. It also covers some of the services of physical and occupational therapists and some home health care. Most people pay a monthly premium for Part B. Medicare Part C is an insurance plan run by private companies approved by Medicare. Medicare Part D provides prescription drug coverage.

Medicaid is the federal government's health care program for low-income and disabled persons and certain groups of seniors in nursing homes. Medicaid is jointly funded by federal–state–local monies, and various factors are taken into account when determining whether a person is eligible for Medicaid. Among these are age, disability, blindness, and pregnancy. Income and resources are also taken into consideration, as well as whether the person is a U.S. citizen or a lawfully admitted immigrant. Each state has its own rules regarding who may be covered under Medicaid, and some provide time-limited coverage for specific categories of individuals, such as uninsured women with breast or cervical cancer or those individuals diagnosed with tuberculosis.

As compared to Medicare, Medicaid has had a more tarnished image throughout its history. Unlike Medicare recipients, who are often seen as “worthy” of their health care benefits, Medicaid recipients have been stigmatized by politicians and media outlets for their participation in a “welfare program.” For a number of years, many physicians refused to take Medicaid patients because the administrative paperwork is burdensome and reimbursements are low—typically less than one-half of what private insurance companies pay for the same services. The Affordable Care Act was designed to improve health care for low-income individuals, particularly if the state in which they resided participated in Medicaid expansion. By early 2020,

only thirty-three states and the District of Columbia had approved this expansion. This meant that the remaining uninsured primarily lived in the South and the Southwest and were more likely to be low-income individuals or those living below the U.S. poverty line. However, even in states that expanded Medicaid, all adults are not covered or they are not covered at the same cost-sharing formula as in other states. Consequently, obtaining health insurance coverage remains a problem for many people in this nation.

Preventive Health Care Services Under the Affordable Care Act, some preventive services must be provided for individuals enrolled in employer-funded health plans or individual health insurance policies that were created after March 23, 2010. Among the preventive services covered at no cost are screening for hypertension (high blood pressure), diabetes, high cholesterol, and cancer. There is also counseling on quitting smoking, losing weight, eating healthfully, treating depression, and reducing alcohol use. Provision is made for certain types of routine vaccinations and flu and pneumonia shots, as well as well-baby and well-child visits to the physician. It is hoped that early detection and preventive measures will cut down the overall cost of health care.

Health Maintenance Organizations (HMOs) Created in an effort to provide workers with health coverage by keeping costs down, *health maintenance organizations (HMOs)* provide, for a set monthly fee, total care with an emphasis on prevention to avoid costly treatment later. About 14 percent of workers in employer-sponsored insurance plans are enrolled in HMOs. In these plans, doctors do not work on a fee-for-service basis, and patients are encouraged to get regular checkups and to practice good health practices (e.g., exercise and eat right). However, research shows that preventive care is good for the individual's health but does not necessarily lower total costs. As long as patients use only the doctors and hospitals that are affiliated with their HMO, they pay no fees, or only small co-payments, beyond their insurance premiums.

Recent concerns about physicians being used as gatekeepers who might prevent some patients from obtaining referrals to specialists or from getting needed treatment have resulted in changes in the policies of some HMOs, which now allow patients to visit health care providers outside an HMO's network or to receive other previously unauthorized services by paying a higher co-payment. However, critics charge that those HMOs whose primary-care physicians are paid on a capitation basis—meaning that they receive only a fixed amount per patient whom they see, regardless of how long they spend with that patient—in effect encourage doctors to undertreat patients.

health maintenance organizations (HMOs)

companies that provide, for a set monthly fee, total care with an emphasis on prevention to avoid costly treatment later.

Managed Care Another approach to controlling health care costs in the United States is known as **managed care**: any system of cost containment that closely monitors and controls health care providers' decisions about medical procedures, diagnostic tests, and other services that should be provided to patients. One type of managed care in the United States is a *preferred provider organization (PPO)*, which is an organization of medical doctors, hospitals, and other health care providers that enters into a contract with an insurer or a third-party administrator to provide health care at a reduced rate to patients who are covered under specific insurance plans. In most managed-care programs, patients choose a primary-care physician from a list of participating doctors. Unlike many of the HMOs, when a patient covered under a PPO plan needs medical services, he or she may contact any one of a number of primary-care physicians or specialists who are "in-network" providers. Like HMOs, most PPO plans do contain a precertification requirement in which scheduled (nonemergency) hospital admissions and certain kinds of procedures must be approved in advance. Through measures such as this, these insurance plans have sought unsuccessfully to curb the rapidly increasing costs of medical care and to reduce the extensive paperwork and bureaucracy involved in the typical medical visit.

HMOs and PPOs have not changed significantly in their organizational structure since the passage of the Affordable Care Act. However, some firms have added other options, such as high-deductible health plans with a health reimbursement arrangement or health savings account (HSA). This is a personal savings account in which the money placed in the account is used to pay for health care expenditures. The individual owns and controls the money in the account, rather than the employer, and it allows users to save money tax free against their annual medical expenses.

The Uninsured Even after implementation of the ACA and the continuation of other public and private insurance programs, many people still do not have health insurance coverage in 2020. Prior to passage of the ACA, about 46.5 million people had no health insurance. Between 2010, when the law was passed, and early 2020, about 27.9 million persons under age sixty-five were uninsured. In 2018, adults age sixty-five and over had the highest coverage rate (99.1 percent) because of Medicare. By contrast, the rates of health insurance coverage and public coverage for children under the age of nineteen decreased slightly for overall coverage and for publicly funded coverage because of reductions in two major programs: Medicaid and CHIP (Children's Health Insurance Program, administered by states based on federal requirements). ■ Figure 14.13 shows that 5.5 percent of children under the age of nineteen did not have health insurance in 2018, as compared to 5.0 percent in 2017. The uninsured rate for children in poverty is greater than the rate for children who do not live in poverty. In 2018 the uninsured rates were highest for Hispanic children (8.7 percent), as compared to 4.1 percent for Asian children,

4.6 percent for black children, and 4.2 percent for white (non-Hispanic) children. But the largest uninsured rate of all was for children who are not U.S. citizens. The rate for noncitizen children was 18.3 percent, as compared to 5.1 percent of children who were native-born citizens.

Two other factors are important to consider in regard to children under the age of nineteen without health insurance coverage. The rate of uninsured children is highest in the South (7.7 percent) as compared to the West (4.8 percent), Northeast (3.6 percent), and Midwest (3.8 percent). It also makes a difference whether the children live in states where Medicaid coverage was expanded. For nonexpansion states the percentage of children without health insurance was 7.9 percent in 2018 as compared to 3.9 in states that expanded Medicaid coverage as part of implementing the ACA.

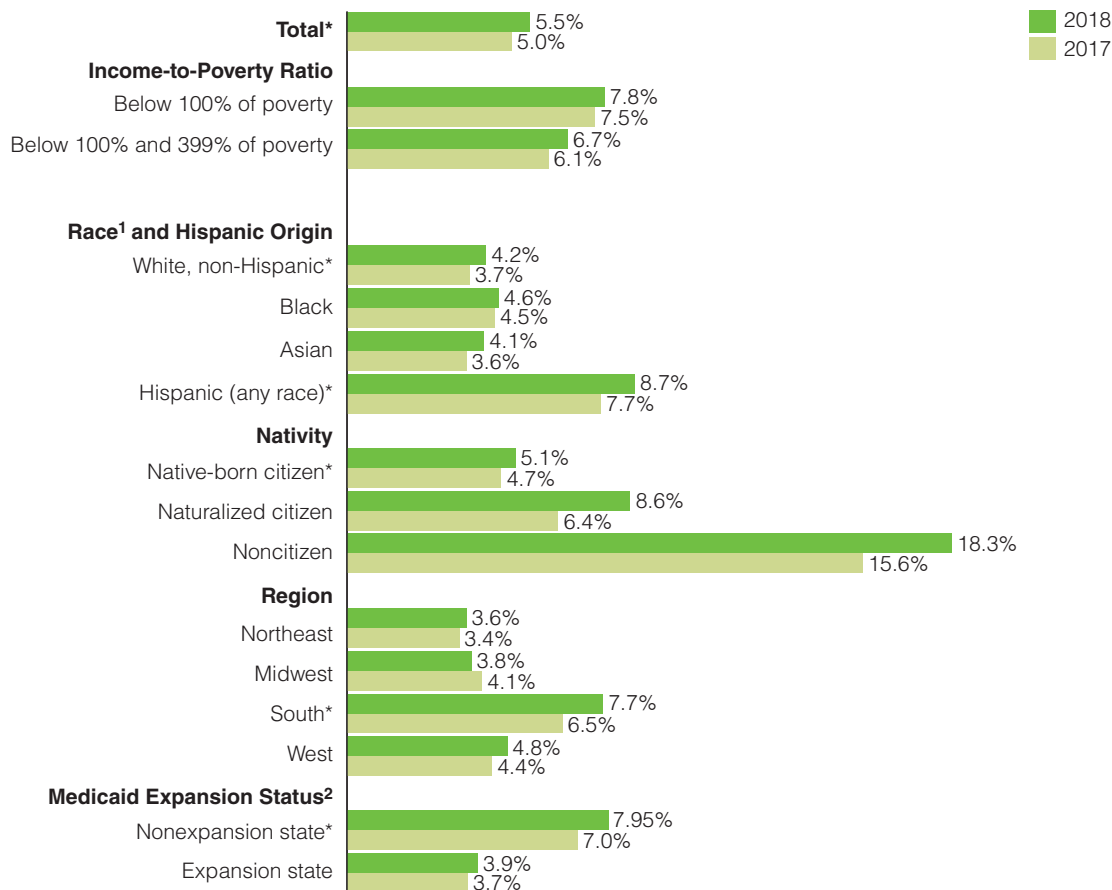
Although much remains to be done to provide health insurance coverage for all children, the age category having the lowest rate of health insurance in 2018 was persons age 19–64. Most likely to be uninsured within this age category were individuals age 19–25. The one exception would be young adult coverage, which is available if a parent has a health insurance plan that covers children and the parent wishes to keep a child or children on their insurance policy until the young person's twenty-sixth birthday. This was one of the provisions added by the ACA when it became law.

Employment status is another important variable in health insurance coverage. Between the ages of nineteen and sixty-four, full-time employees are more likely to have health insurance as compared to those who work less than full time or persons who are unemployed. Many of the uninsured are in working families but do not have access to or cannot afford employer-sponsored health insurance coverage. Even if their employers offer group health insurance, some employees cannot afford their share of the premiums or the out-of-pocket expenditures such as co-payments. It will be interesting to see if further implementation of ACA takes place to cover even more of the uninsured or if the ACA will be repealed and some other plan put in its place. Current discussions include the possibility of creating a universal Medicare system for all, regardless of a person's age, or thinking of ways to remodel existing health insurance coverage in the United States so that it more closely resembles a plan from another nation. These options have been discussed for many years, and we are far from reaching any national consensus.

Paying for Medical Care in Other Nations

Other nations have various ways in which they provide health care for their citizens. Let's examine how other nations pay for health care.

Canada Health care in Canada is delivered through a publicly funded health care system, also known as "Medicare." The Canadian health care system does not constitute what is referred to as **socialized medicine**—a



*Denotes a statistically significant change between 2017 and 2018 at the 90 percent confidence level.

¹Federal surveys give respondents the option of reporting more than one race. This figure shows data using the race-alone concept. For example, Asian refers to people who reported Asian and no other race.

²Expansion status as of January 1, 2018. See Table 6: Number and Percentage of People Without Health Insurance Coverage by State: 2017 and 2018.

Note: For information on confidentiality protection, sampling error, nonsampling error, and definitions in the Current Population Survey, see <https://www2.census.gov/programs-surveys/cps/techdocs/cpsmar19.pdf>.

FIGURE 14.13 Percentage of Children Under the Age of 19 Without Health Insurance Coverage by Selected Characteristics: 2017 and 2018.

Source: Berchick, Barnett, and Upton, 2019.

health care system in which the government owns the medical care facilities and employs the physicians. Rather, Canada has maintained the private nature of the medical profession. Although the government pays most health care costs, the physicians are not government employees and have much greater autonomy than do physicians in the health care system in Great Britain. This means that Canada has **universal health care**—a health care system in which all citizens receive medical services paid for by tax revenues. For many years, services have been provided by private entities and are mostly free to patients. However, universal coverage in Canada covers only a narrow range of medically necessary services while other essential services are sometimes inconsistently provided for patients. For this reason, many analysts view the system as inadequate to meet the needs of Canadian residents in the twenty-first century.

The most pressing problems in Canadian health care financing and provision of services are the need

for system modernization, cutting down on wait times for patient care, and reducing the workload of care providers. Another issue is privacy: Information is supposed to remain private between the physician and patient, and the government is not supposed to be involved in actual patient care or the handling of medical information.

managed care

any system of cost containment that closely monitors and controls health care providers' decisions about medical procedures, diagnostic tests, and other services that should be provided to patients.

socialized medicine

a health care system in which the government owns the medical care facilities and employs the physicians.

universal health care

a health care system in which all citizens receive medical services paid for by tax revenues.

One major benefit of the Canadian system is a significant reduction in administrative costs. In the United States, we spend almost twice on administrative costs as is spent in Canada. The Canadian plan also has portability, which means that each citizen receives a health card and, as long as a person's premiums are paid up, health coverage is not affected if the individual loses or changes jobs. Another benefit is that efforts continue to bring about positive change in the system. The Canadian Medical Association has sought to transform how health care is delivered. This organization is working toward building a culture of patient-centered care, enhancing access and quality of care, establishing a continuum of care so that patients will receive the medical services they need at different stages in their illness or hospitalization, and providing health care providers with the resources that they need to help patients, such as new health information technologies and better accountability at all levels of the system. The Canadian health care system has been viewed positively for many years, but it also has significant problems that health care providers and others believe are in need of remediation.

Great Britain Great Britain has a centralized, single-payer health care system that is funded by general revenues. The National Health Service (NHS) Act of 1946 provides for all health care services to be available at no charge to the entire population. These services include fees for ambulance rides, emergency room services, hospital stays, surgery, radiation, and chemotherapy, which are to be paid for by payroll taxes. Although physicians work out of offices or clinics, the government sets health care policies, raises funds and controls the medical care budget, owns health care facilities, and directly employs physicians and other health care personnel.

The health care system in Great Britain constitutes socialized medicine. Physicians receive capitation payments from the government: a fixed annual fee for each patient in their practice regardless of how many times they see the patient or what procedures they may perform. They also receive supplemental payments for each low-income or elderly patient, bonus payments if they meet targets for providing preventive services, and financial incentives if they practice in medically underserved areas.

In the United Kingdom, private health care is also available. It is paid for by patients either out-of-pocket or through their private insurance coverage. Physicians may accept private patients, but these patients rarely constitute more than a small fraction of a physician's practice. In some areas, hospitals reserve a small number of beds for private patients. Why would anyone want to be a private patient who pays for her or his own care or hospital bed if public funds are available to take care of these services? The answer is primarily found in the desire to avoid the long waits ("queues") that the general population encounters and the fact that private patients can enter the hospital for surgery at times convenient to the consumer rather than wait upon the convenience of the system (■ Figure 14.14).



Paul Marriott/Alamy Stock Photo

FIGURE 14.14 Although the National Health Service (NHS) in England provides free health care services, funded by tax monies, for anyone who is a permanent UK resident, private health care is also available for those who are willing to pay. The private Lindo Wing suite of St. Mary's Hospital, where all three of the children of Prince William and Princess Kate, Duchess of Cambridge, were born, is an example of the luxurious accommodations available for persons who are willing to pay for hotel-like amenities.

Despite some problems faced by the NHS, many U.K. citizens think very favorably of their health care system. In most years, life expectancy is higher in Britain than the United States at the same time that the NHS is spending less than half per person of what Americans are spending on health care.

People's Republic of China In recent years the People's Republic of China has seen many changes in the delivery and financing of medical care. In China, almost everyone is covered by the social health insurance system and basic public health service package. The social health insurance system focuses primarily on curative care only (where patients are already ill or otherwise currently in need of medical attention). By contrast, the basic public health service package covers preventive care only. Efforts are being made to combine these two packages so that both

rural and urban people, poor and well-off alike, will be better served by the health care system.

The health care system in China is a complex mix of market-driven capitalism, communism, and massive government spending. The profit-driven system is based on fee-for-service practice by physicians and the sale of expensive pharmaceutical products that are marketed by doctors and hospitals. Much of the profit is through drug sales, particularly intravenous (IV) treatments, which are used much more widely than in the United States. Pharmaceutical products have become somewhat more affordable since pricing regulations were passed in 2008–2009.

What is the history of health care delivery and funding in China? After a lengthy civil war, in 1949 the Communist Party won control of mainland China but found itself in charge of a vast nation with a population of one billion people, most of whom lived in poverty and misery. With a lack of financial resources and not enough trained health care personnel, China adopted a policy to create a large number of physician extenders who could educate the public about health and the treatment of illness and disease. Referred to as *street doctors* in urban areas and *village doctors* (formerly “barefoot doctors”) in the countryside, these individuals had little formal training and worked under the supervision of trained physicians. Since that time, medical training has become more rigorous. All doctors receive training in both Western and traditional Chinese medicine.

Most doctors who work in hospitals receive a salary; all other doctors now work on a fee-for-service basis. In urban areas, about 95 percent of the working population has health insurance coverage paid for by employers, but individuals often pay large out-of-pocket fees because of gaps in health care coverage. New government initiatives established in the 2010s called for the establishment of a clinic in each rural community; however, many more physicians will be needed to provide adequate care for the millions of people living in these areas. In urban areas reports show that it is difficult to get into a hospital even with insurance. Increasing demands for services have placed the already overburdened system under greater stress, and many people line up outside the more prestigious hospitals early in the morning on the day before they want treatment to get their name on lengthy waiting lists. Although local doctors might be able to take care of their needs, many Chinese patients want to be treated in the more prestigious hospitals, where they believe they will receive higher-quality care. To help meet the growing demands on the health care delivery system, the Chinese government is attempting to improve thousands of medical centers and to focus on preventive care, especially for infants, children, pregnant women, and those in need of mental health care. The health care disparities remain great in urban and rural areas. More money and medical personnel are needed throughout the system but especially in rural areas to meet the needs of a rapidly growing population.

In looking at Canada, Great Britain, and the People's Republic of China, we can see that regardless of which

approach to health care delivery and financing a nation uses, many difficult questions exist about the best way to meet patients' needs and not bankrupt the medical system and the nation. Advanced medical technology is one area that may greatly increase health care costs and create new concerns in health care delivery systems.

Social Implications of Advanced Medical Technology

Advances in medical technology are occurring at a speed that is almost unbelievable; however, sociologists and other social scientists have identified specific social implications of some of the new technologies:

1. *Advanced technologies create options for people and for society, but these options alter human relationships.* An example is the ability of medical personnel to sustain a life that in earlier times would have ended as the result of premature birth, disease or an accident. Although this can be beneficial, technologically advanced equipment (that can sustain life after consciousness is lost and there is no likelihood that the person will recover) can create a difficult decision for the family of that person if he or she has not left a *living will*—a document stating the person's wishes regarding the medical circumstances under which his or her life should be terminated. Federal law requires all hospitals and other medical facilities to honor the terms of a living will but sometimes this is a complicated process and may not produce the end result the patient had envisioned.
2. *Advanced technologies increase the cost of medical care.* For example, the computerized axial tomography (CT or CAT) scanner—which combines a computer with X-rays that are passed through the body at different angles—produces clear images of the interior of the body that are invaluable in investigating disease. The cost of such a scanner may be more than \$1 million. Magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) equipment that allows pictures to be taken of internal organs ranges in cost from \$1 million to \$2.5 million, and positron emission tomography (PET) and PET-CT scanners often cost more than \$2 million (■ Figure 14.15). Can the United States afford such equipment in every hospital for every patient? The money available for health care is not unlimited, and when it is spent on high-tech equipment and treatment, it is being reallocated from other health care programs that might be of greater assistance to more people.
3. *Advanced technologies such as cloning and stem cell research raise provocative questions about the very nature of life.* In 1997 Dr. Ian Williams and his associates in Scotland cloned a lamb (that they named Dolly) from the DNA of an adult sheep. Subsequently, scientists have cloned other animals in the same manner, raising a number



FIGURE 14.15 High-tech medical imaging devices such as the one shown here are very expensive. Some analysts question whether such large expenditures could be better used instead to help more people in different ways.

of profound questions: If scientists can duplicate mammals from adult DNA, is it possible to clone a human being? If it is possible, would it be ethical? In 2018, a Chinese researcher claimed to have produced the first gene-edited twin babies by using a powerful new tool to alter their DNA. In the early 2020s, gene editing was banned in the United States for medical and ethical reasons. Stem cell research has been an important and controversial issue in medicine. Stem cell research is important because stem cells—which are accessible in the skin and through extraction from umbilical cord blood and human embryos—can be used to generate virtually any type of specialized cell in the human body and to replace diseased or damaged human tissue. However, opponents of embryonic stem cell research believe that a human life is taken when a human embryo is destroyed in this research. Proponents of stem cell research respond that these studies do not always require the use of embryos.

At the same time that high-tech medicine is becoming a major part of overall health care, many people are turning to holistic medicine and alternative healing practices.

Holistic Medicine and Alternative Medicine

When examining the subject of medicine, it is easy to think only in terms of conventional (or mainstream) medical treatment. By contrast, *holistic medicine* is an approach to health care that focuses on prevention of illness and disease and is aimed at treating the whole person—body and mind—rather than just the part or parts in which symptoms occur. Under this approach it is important that people not

look solely to medicine and doctors for their health, but that people also engage in health-promoting behavior. Likewise, medical professionals must not only treat illness and disease but also work with the patient to promote a healthy lifestyle and self-image.

Many practitioners of *alternative medicine*—healing practices inconsistent with dominant medical practice—take a holistic approach, and today many people are turning to alternative medicine, such as the use of herbal therapies, to supplement or replace traditional medicine (■ Figure 14.16). However, many medical doctors are opposed to alternative medicine. In understanding the medical establishment's reaction to alternative medicine, it is important to keep in mind the philosophy of scientific medicine—that medicine is a science, not an art. Thus, to the extent to which alternative medicine is “non-scientific,” it must be quackery and therefore something that is worthless and possibly

harmful. Undoubtedly, self-interest is also involved in mainstream medicine's reaction to alternative medicine: If the public can be persuaded that scientific medicine is the only legitimate healing practice, fewer health care dollars will be spent on a form of medical treatment that is (at least to some extent) in competition with the medical establishment. But if all forms of alternative medicine (including chiropractic, massage, and spiritual) are taken into account, people spend more money on unconventional therapies than they do for all hospitalizations. For this reason, *complementary medicine* has become more widespread. This term refers to treatments that are used along with standard medical treatments (but are not considered to be standard treatments) that are believed to be beneficial for a patient. For example, cancer patients may have standard treatments such as surgery, radiation therapy, and chemotherapy and also complementary medicine such as acupuncture, massage, or other mind-body treatments to help lessen some side effects of cancer treatment. The term *integrative medicine* refers to a total approach that combines complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) with standard medicine. Some medical schools have added this approach to their curriculum for students who are interested in pursuing this approach to patient care.

Sociological Perspectives on Health and Medicine

Functionalist, conflict, symbolic interactionist, and post-modernist perspectives focus on different aspects of health and medicine. Each provides us with significant insights on the problems associated with these pressing social concerns.



Guang Niu/Getty Images

FIGURE 14.16 The use of herbal therapies is a form of alternative medicine that is increasing in popularity in the United States. How does this approach to health care differ from a more traditional medical approach?

A Functionalist Perspective: The Sick Role

According to the functionalist approach, if society is to function as a stable system, it is important for people to be healthy and to contribute to their society. Consequently, sickness is viewed as a form of deviant behavior that must be controlled by society. This view was initially set forth by classical sociologist Talcott Parsons (1951) in his concept of the **sick role**—the set of patterned expectations that defines the norms and values appropriate for individuals who are sick and for those who interact with them. According to Parsons, the sick role has four primary characteristics:

1. People who are sick are not responsible for their condition. It is assumed that being sick is not a deliberate and knowing choice of the sick person.
2. People who assume the sick role are temporarily exempt from their normal roles and obligations. For example, people with illnesses are typically not expected to go to school or work.
3. People who are sick must want to get well. The sick role is considered to be a temporary one that people must relinquish as soon as their condition improves sufficiently. Those who do not return to their regular activities in a timely fashion may be labeled as hypochondriacs or malingerers.

4. People who are sick must seek competent help from a medical professional to hasten their recovery.

As these characteristics show, Parsons believed that illness is dysfunctional for both individuals and the larger society. Those who assume the sick role are unable to fulfill their necessary social roles, such as being parents or employees. Similarly, people who are ill lose days from their productive roles in society, thus weakening the ability of groups and organizations to fulfill their functions.

According to Parsons, it is important for the society to maintain social control over people who enter the sick role. Physicians are empowered to determine who may enter this role and when patients are ready to exit it. Because physicians spend many years in training and have specialized knowledge about illness and its treatment, they are certified by the society to be “gatekeepers” of the sick role.

holistic medicine

an approach to health care that focuses on prevention of illness and disease and is aimed at treating the whole person—body and mind—rather than just the part or parts in which symptoms occur.

sick role

the set of patterned expectations that defines the norms and values appropriate for individuals who are sick and for those who interact with them.

When patients seek the advice of a physician, they enter into the doctor–patient relationship, which does not contain equal power for both parties. The patient is expected to follow the “doctor’s orders” by adhering to a treatment regimen, recovering from the malady, and returning to a normal routine as soon as possible.

What are the major strengths and weaknesses of Parsons’s model and, more generally, of the functionalist view of health and illness? Parsons’s analysis of the sick role was pathbreaking when it was introduced, and it is still included in some contemporary Sociology of Medicine courses. Why? Some social analysts believe that Parsons made a major contribution to our knowledge of how society explains illness-related behavior and how physicians have maintained their gatekeeper status. In contrast, other analysts believe that the sick-role model does not take into account racial–ethnic, class, and gender variations in the ways that people view illness and interpret this role. For example, this model does not take into account the fact that many individuals in the working class may choose not to accept the sick role unless they are seriously ill—because they cannot afford to miss time from work and lose a portion of their earnings. Moreover, people without health insurance may not have the option of assuming the sick role.

A Conflict Perspective: Inequalities in Health and Health Care

Unlike the functionalist approach, conflict theory emphasizes the political, economic, and social forces that affect health and the health care delivery system. Among the issues of concern to conflict theorists are the ability of all people to obtain health care; how race, class, and gender inequalities affect health and health care; power relationships between doctors and other health care workers; the dominance of the medical model of health care; and the role of profit in the health care system.

Who is responsible for problems in the U.S. health care system? According to many conflict theorists, problems in U.S. health care delivery are rooted in the capitalist economy, which views medicine as a commodity that is produced and sold by the medical–industrial complex (■ Figure 14.17). The *medical–industrial complex* encompasses physicians, hospitals, and global health-related industries such as insurance companies and pharmaceutical and medical supply companies.

The United States is one of the few industrialized nations that has relied almost exclusively on the medical–industrial complex for health care delivery and has not had any form of universal health coverage to provide some level of access to medical treatment for all people.



FIGURE 14.17 According to the conflict perspective, problems in U.S. health care delivery are rooted in the capitalist economy, which views medicine as a commodity that is produced and sold by the medical-industrial complex.

Consequently, access to high-quality medical care has been linked to people’s ability to pay and to their position within the class structure. Those who are affluent or have good medical insurance may receive high-quality, state-of-the-art care in the medical–industrial complex because of its elaborate technologies and treatments. However, people below the poverty level and those just above it have greater difficulty gaining access to medical care. Referred to as the *medically indigent*, these individuals do not earn enough to afford private medical care but earn too much money to keep them from qualifying for Medicaid. In the profit-oriented capitalist economy, these individuals are said to “fall between the cracks” in the health care system.

Who benefits from the existing structure of medicine? According to conflict theorists, physicians—who hold a legal monopoly over medicine—benefit from the existing structure because they can charge inflated fees. Similarly, clinics, pharmacies, laboratories, hospitals, supply manufacturers, insurance companies, the pharmaceutical industry, and many other corporations derive excessive profits from the existing system of payment in medicine. As a result, medical costs have risen rapidly, and the federal government and many insurance companies have placed pressure for cost containment on other players in the medical–industrial complex.

Conflict theorists increase our awareness of inequalities of race, class, and gender, as these statuses influence people’s access to health care. They also inform us about the problems associated with health care becoming “big business.” However, some analysts believe that the conflict approach is unduly pessimistic about the gains that have been made in health status and longevity—gains that are at least partially the result of large investments in research and treatment by the medical–industrial complex.

A Symbolic Interactionist Perspective: The Social Construction of Illness

Symbolic interactionists attempt to understand the specific meanings and causes that we attribute to particular events. In studying health, symbolic interactionists focus on the meanings that social actors give their illness or disease and how these affect people's self-concept and relationships with others. According to symbolic interactionists, we socially construct "health" and "illness" and how both should be treated. For example, some people explain disease by blaming it on those who are ill. If we attribute cancer to the acts of a person, such as smoking tobacco or vaping, we can assume that we will be immune to that disease if we do not engage in the same behavior. Nonsmokers who learn that a lung cancer victim had a two-pack-a-day habit feel comforted that they are unlikely to suffer the same fate. Similarly, victims of AIDS are often blamed for promiscuous sexual conduct or intravenous drug use, regardless of how they contracted HIV. In this case the social definition of the illness leads to the stigmatization of individuals who suffer from the disease.

Although biological characteristics provide objective criteria for determining medical conditions such as heart disease, tuberculosis, or cancer, there is also a subjective component to how illness is defined. This subjective component is very important when we look at conditions such as childhood hyperactivity, mental illness, alcoholism, drug abuse, cigarette smoking, and overeating, all of which have been medicalized. The term **medicalization** refers to the process whereby nonmedical problems become defined and treated as illnesses or disorders. Medicalization may occur on three levels: (1) the conceptual level (e.g., the use of medical terminology to define the problem), (2) the institutional level (e.g., physicians are supervisors of treatment and gatekeepers to applying for benefits), and (3) the interactional level (e.g., when physicians treat patients' conditions as medical problems). For example, sociologists Deborah Findlay and Leslie Miller (1994: 277) explain how gambling was medicalized (■ Figure 14.18):

Habitual gambling . . . has been regarded by a minority as a sin, and by most as a leisure pursuit—perhaps wasteful but a pastime nevertheless. Lately, however, we have seen gambling described as a psychological illness—"compulsive gambling." It is in the process of being medicalized. The consequences of this shift in discourse (that is, in the way of thinking and talking) about gambling are considerable for doctors, who now have in gamblers a new market for their services or "treatment"; perhaps for gambling halls, which may



FIGURE 14.18 Is gambling a moral issue or a medical one? According to sociologists, the recent trend toward viewing compulsive gambling as a health care issue is an example of the medicalization of deviance.

find themselves subject to new regulations, insofar as they are deemed to contribute to the "disease"; and not least, for gamblers themselves, who are no longer treated as sinners or wastrels, but as patients, with claims on our sympathy, and to our medical insurance plans as well.

Sociologists often refer to this form of medicalization as the *medicalization of deviance* because it gives physicians and other medical professionals greater authority to determine what should be considered "normal" and "acceptable" behavior and to establish the appropriate mechanisms for controlling "deviant" behaviors.

According to symbolic interactionists, medicalization is a two-way process: Just as conditions can be medicalized, so can they be demedicalized. **Demedicalization** refers to the process whereby a problem ceases to be defined as an illness or a disorder. Examples include the removal of certain behaviors (such as homosexuality) from the list of mental disorders compiled by the American Psychiatric Association and the deinstitutionalization of mental health patients. The process of demedicalization also continues in women's health as advocates seek to redefine childbirth and menopause as natural processes rather than as illnesses.

medical-industrial complex

local physicians, local hospitals, and global health-related industries such as insurance companies and pharmaceutical and medical supply companies.

medicalization

the process whereby nonmedical problems become defined and treated as illnesses or disorders.

demedicalization

the process whereby a problem ceases to be defined as an illness or a disorder.

CONCEPT Quick Review

Sociological Perspectives on Health and Medicine

A Functionalist Perspective: The Sick Role	People who are sick are temporarily exempt from normal obligations but must want to get well and seek competent help.
A Conflict Perspective: Inequalities in Health and Health Care	Problems in health care are rooted in the capitalist system, exemplified by the medical-industrial complex.
A Symbolic Interactionist Perspective: The Social Construction of Illness	People socially construct both “health” and “illness” and how both should be treated.
A Postmodernist Perspective: The Clinical Gaze	Doctors gain power through observing patients to gather information, thus appearing to speak “wisely.”

In addition to how health and illness are defined, symbolic interactionists examine how doctors and patients interact in health care settings. Some physicians may hesitate to communicate certain kinds of medical information to patients, such as why they are prescribing certain medications or what side effects or drug interactions may occur.

Symbolic interactionist perspectives on health and health care provide us with new insights on the social construction of illness and how health and illness cannot be strictly determined by medical criteria. Symbolic interactionists also make us aware of the importance of communication between physicians and patients, including factors that may reduce effective medical treatment for some individuals. However, these approaches have been criticized for suggesting that few objective medical criteria exist for many illnesses and for overemphasizing microlevel issues without giving adequate recognition to macrolevel issues such as the effects on health care of managed care, health maintenance organizations, and for-profit hospital chains.

A Postmodernist Perspective: The Clinical Gaze

In *The Birth of the Clinic* (1994/1963), postmodern theorist Michel Foucault questioned existing assumptions about medical knowledge and the power that doctors have gained over other medical personnel and everyday people. Foucault asserted that truth in medicine—as in all other areas of life—is a social construction, in this instance one that doctors have created. Foucault believed that doctors gain power through the *clinical* (or “observing”) *gaze*, which they use to gather information. Doctors develop the clinical gaze through their observation of patients; as the doctors begin to diagnose and treat medical conditions, they also start to speak “wisely” about everything.

According to Foucault, the prestige of the medical establishment was further enhanced when it became possible to categorize all illnesses within a definitive network of disease classifications under which physicians can claim that they know why patients are sick. Moreover, the invention of new tests made it necessary for physicians to gaze upon the

naked body, to listen to the human heart with an instrument, and to run tests on the patient’s body fluids. Patients who objected were criticized by doctors for their “false modesty” and “excessive restraint” (Foucault, 1994/1963: 163). As the new rules allowed for the patient to be touched and prodded, the myth of the doctor’s diagnostic wisdom was further enhanced, and “medical gestures, words, gazes took on a philosophical density that had formerly belonged only to mathematical thought” (Foucault, 1994/1963: 199). For Foucault, the formation of clinical medicine was merely one of the more visible ways in which the fundamental structures of human experience have changed throughout history.

Foucault’s work provides new insights on medical dominance, but it has been criticized for its lack of attention to alternative viewpoints. Among these is the possibility that medical breakthroughs and new technologies actually help physicians become wiser and more scientific in their endeavors. Another criticism is that Foucault’s approach is based on the false assumption that people are passive individuals who simply comply with doctors’ orders—he does not take into account that people (either consciously or unconsciously) may resist the myth that the doctor is always right and not follow the doctor’s orders. The Concept Quick Review summarizes the major sociological perspectives on health and medicine.

Foucault’s analysis (1988/1961) was not limited to doctors who treat bodily illness; he also critiqued psychiatrists and the treatment of insanity.

Mental Disorders

Mental disorders affect many people; however, this is a difficult topic for sociological research. The terms *mental disorder*, *mental illness*, and *psychiatric disorder* are often used somewhat interchangeably to describe a behavioral or mental pattern that causes significant distress or impairment of personal functioning. Physicians and other mental health providers base a diagnosis of mental illness on several factors, including a physical exam to rule out physical problems that might cause the patient’s symptoms. They also order a series of lab

tests to check for such things as thyroid function and alcohol and drug abuse. (One category of mental disorders is substance abuse disorders.) Another important tool in diagnosing mental illness is a psychological evaluation conducted by a doctor or mental health professional that asks patients about their symptoms, thoughts, feelings, and behavior patterns or has the patient fill out a questionnaire about these concerns (Mayo Clinic, 2020). Based on the above information, professionals seek to identify specific mental conditions affecting the patient based on the criteria listed in the fifth edition of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM-5), published by the American Psychiatric Association (see ■ Table 14.1). Here is the point at which some medical professionals distinguish between a *mental disorder*—a condition that makes it difficult or impossible for a person to cope with everyday life—and

mental illness—a condition in which a person has a severe mental disorder requiring extensive treatment with medication, psychotherapy, and sometimes hospitalization.

How many people are affected by mental illness? Data from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA; 2019) indicate that an estimated 47.6 million adults age eighteen or older experienced some form of mental illness in 2018. Of that number, about 11.4 million adults experienced a serious mental illness, which means that a person has serious functional impairment that substantially interferes with or limits life activities. In 2018, it was reported that 20.9 million persons age twelve and older had a substance use disorder, and of these individuals, 9.2 million people had both a mental disorder and a substance use disorder (SAMHSA, 2019).

TABLE 14.1 Criteria for Psychiatric Disorders Identified by the American Psychiatric Association

Neurodevelopmental disorders	Intellectual disability (intellectual developmental disorder), communication disorders, and autism spectrum disorder
Schizophrenia spectrum and other psychotic disorders	Disorders with symptoms such as delusions or hallucinations
Bipolar and related disorders	Mood swings that range from depression to mania
Depressive disorders	Includes major depressive disorder (clinical depression), disruptive mood dysregulation disorder in children up to age eighteen years, and premenstrual dysphoric disorder
Anxiety disorders	Disorders characterized by anxiety that is manifested in phobias or panic attacks
Obsessive–compulsive and related disorders	Behavior that is obsessive and compulsive in nature, including excoriation (skin-picking) disorder, hoarding disorder, substance/medication-induced obsessive–compulsive and related disorder, and obsessive–compulsive and related disorder caused by another medical condition
Trauma- and stressor-related disorders	Including posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), reactive attachment disorder, and disinhibited social engagement disorder
Dissociative disorders	Depersonalization/derealization disorder and other problems involving disassociation with normal consciousness such as dissociative amnesia
Somatic symptom and related disorders	Including psychological problems that present themselves as symptoms of physical disease
Feeding and eating disorders	Including avoidant/restrictive food intake disorder, anorexia nervosa, bulimia nervosa, and binge eating disorder
Sleep–wake disorders	Including insomnia disorder, narcolepsy, some breathing-related sleep disorders, and other problems associated with sleep
Sexual dysfunctions	Gender-specific sexual dysfunctions of a duration of six months or more
Gender dysphoria	Intense anxiety about one's birth gender as compared to one's perceived gender
Disruptive, impulse-control, and conduct disorders	Including the inability to control disruptive behavior, lack of impulse control, and conduct disorders such as kleptomania and pyromania
Substance-related and addictive disorders	Disorders resulting from abuse of alcohol and/or drugs; gambling disorder and tobacco use disorder
Neurocognitive disorders (NCDs)	Including dementia and amnesic disorder and substantive/medication-induced NCDs
Paraphilic disorders	Sexual masochism disorder rooted in atypical sexual interests that cause persons to feel distressed about their interest and/or to cause another person to have psychological distress, injury, or death as a result of this disorder

Source: Adapted from American Psychiatric Association, 2013.

Mental disorders are very costly to the nation. Direct costs associated with mental disorders include the price of medication, psychotherapy, clinic visits, and hospital stays and residential treatment programs. Psychiatric medications such as antidepressants, antianxiety medications, mood-stabilizing medications, and antipsychotic medications may be very costly, particularly when they are prescribed for extended periods of time. Treatments such as psychotherapy, brain-stimulation treatments (such as electroconvulsive therapy, repetitive transcranial magnetic stimulation, deep brain stimulation, and vagus nerve stimulation), hospital and residential treatment programs, and substance abuse treatment often vary widely in cost based on location of the patient and mental health providers, length of treatment required, coverage requirements of insurance companies, and other issues pertaining to the patient's health insurance coverage. Many indirect costs of mental illness are incurred as well. These include loss of earnings by individuals, costs associated with potential homelessness and/or incarceration, and other indirect costs that exist but are difficult to document.

The Treatment of Mental Illness

Before we can effectively treat and reduce mental illness in the United States and worldwide, we first have to convince some people that mental illness actually exists. If you do an online search or check some social media sites, you will find discussions by people who either do or do not believe mental illness exists. Some blame mental illness of capitalism; others say there is no such thing as mental illness and that the toxic effects of culture actually contribute to people's thoughts and actions that might be diagnosed as a mental disorder (Coburn, 2019).

The idea of mental illness as a myth is deep-rooted in sociomedical thinking. An earlier social analyst, Thomas Szasz (1984), was one of the first to popularize the idea that mental illness is a myth. According to Szasz, mental illnesses are actually individual traits or behaviors that society deems unacceptable, immoral, or deviant. But labeling individuals as “mentally ill” harms them because they often come to accept the label and are then treated accordingly by others. Some contemporary social analysts are no closer to reaching a

consensus about mental disorders than they were when Szasz originally introduced his ideas. However, many medical practitioners and academic scholars believe that mental disorders are definitely a reality that has biological, psychological, environmental, social, and other factors involved (Figure 14.19).

An early spokesperson for the reality of mental illness was French philosopher Michel Foucault. In *Madness and Civilization*, Foucault (1988/1961) examined the “archaeology of madness” from 1500 until 1800 to determine how ideas of mental illness have changed over time and to describe the “birth of the asylum.” According to Foucault, early in this period insanity was considered part of everyday life, and people with mental illnesses were free to walk the streets; however, beginning with the Renaissance and continuing into the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the mentally ill were viewed as a threat to others. During that time, asylums were built, and a clear distinction was drawn between the “insane” and the rest of humanity.

Today, many people with mental disorders do not receive professional treatment; U.S. adults who receive care for mental health problems are more likely to receive such care from primary-care and general-care providers who are not specialists in mental health care. The lack of available mental health providers, as well as inadequate insurance coverage, means that many people with mental health problems fall through the cracks and receive no treatment at all. Many people who do receive psychiatric assistance are treated with medications or psychotherapy—which is believed to help patients understand the underlying reasons



FIGURE 14.19 Many hospitals have facilities designed for helping patients diagnosed with a mental disorder or mental illness. The 2010 Affordable Care Act, signed into law by President Barack Obama, expanded mental health and substance use disorder services for millions of Americans who previously did not have this benefit. It remains to be seen if the Trump Administration will provide continuing political and financial support for important services such as these.

for their problem—and sometimes are treated in psychiatric programs of local hospitals or residential treatment centers, some of which include 24-hour inpatient care while others have daycare-type treatments to help people cope with their problem.

In the past a higher percentage of persons were institutionalized with mental disorder, but this changed in the 1960s with the introduction of new psychoactive drugs and activism by the deinstitutionalization movement. **Deinstitutionalization** refers to the practice of rapidly discharging patients from mental hospitals into the community. Originally devised as a solution for the problem of “warehousing” mentally ill patients in large, prison-like mental hospitals in the first half of the twentieth century, deinstitutionalization itself is now viewed as a problem by some social scientists. The theory behind this process was that patients’ rights were being violated because many patients experienced involuntary commitment (i.e., without their consent) to the hospitals, where they remained for extended periods of time. Instead, some professionals argued that the patients’ mental disorders could be controlled with proper medications and treatment from community-based mental health facilities. Advocates of deinstitutionalization also believed that this practice would relieve the stigma attached to mental illness and hospitalization. However, critics of deinstitutionalization argue that this process exacerbated long-term problems associated with inadequate care for people with mental illness.

Patients may be admitted to a psychiatric facility voluntarily, informally, or on an involuntary basis. Individuals who are admitted voluntarily complete a written application, receive treatment, and may be released within five days after they file a request to be released. However, if medical personnel do not believe release is in the best interest of the patient, the facility can file court papers asking for a continuation of treatment for the patient. In this case, the patient may be held in the facility for additional weeks beyond their request. By contrast, in informal admission procedures, the patient does not fill out an admission form giving up some of his or her rights, and it is easier for the patient to leave the facility whenever the person chooses because they can request to be discharged immediately at any time during regular business hours. Patients admitted to an involuntary psychiatric facility are usually considered to be for the benefit and protection of the general public. This type of admission often occurs when medical practitioners or law enforcement officers have reason to believe that the potential patient is likely to harm other people or cause some significant damage to the community. Patients who are involuntarily committed frequently are demonstrating some kind of violent or erratic behavior. They may be in possession of a weapon or have indicated some desire to harm themselves or other people. Theoretically, medical professionals and law enforcement officials are not trying to punish the individual who is demonstrating behaviors associated with mental illness; they are trying to protect the individual, others with whom he or she may come in

contact, and the larger society. In most states, an involuntary psychiatric commitment cannot extend beyond seventy-two hours without a formal hearing.

Involuntary admission of patients to a psychiatric hospital has always been controversial; however, it remains a method by which police officers, judges, social workers, and other officials deal with people—particularly the homeless—whom they have reason to believe are mentally ill and imminently dangerous to others or themselves if not detained. Fewer than seven hundred psychiatric hospitals continue to provide most of the chronic inpatient care for people with mental illnesses. These institutions tend to serve as a revolving door to jails, prisons, and homeless facilities for indigent patients. According to sociologist Erving Goffman’s (1961a) classic work on mental hospitals, these facilities may be defined as a *total institution*, a place where people are isolated from the rest of society for a period of time and come under the complete control of the officials who run the institution. Are you familiar with mental health facilities in your community? Do you know how persons with mental disorders are treated in your state?

Disability

What is a disability? **Disability** refers to a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major activities that a person would normally do at a given stage of life and that may result in stigmatization or discrimination against the person with a disability. Some disabilities involve physical conditions, but others involve mental abilities. However, according to disability rights advocates, social attitudes and the social and physical environments in which people live are contributing factors to the extent to which a person may be considered “disabled.” An example of a disabling environment is a school or office building in which elevator buttons and faucets on public restroom sinks are located beyond the reach of a person using a wheelchair. In such a setting the person’s disability derives from the fact that necessary objects in everyday life have been made inaccessible. According to advocates, disability must be thought of in terms of how society causes or contributes to the problem—not in terms of what is “wrong” with the person with a disability.

A second crucial factor in understanding disability is how the person is viewed and treated by other people. Many examples could be given of persons with a disability who

deinstitutionalization

the practice of rapidly discharging patients from mental hospitals into the community.

disability

a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major activities that a person would normally do at a given stage of life and that may result in stigmatization or discrimination against the person with a disability.

have been made uncomfortable by “able-bodied” individuals who think they are “helping” the person with a disability when they make some comment about the disability or the perceived inadequacies it causes.

Some estimates suggest that about 61 million adults in the United States live with a disability. About 26 percent (one in four) of all adults in the United States have some type of disability. These figures vary by region, state, and age. For example, the percentage of people living with disabilities in this country is highest in the South. Of all persons in the United States with disabilities, adults age seventy-five years and older are mostly likely to have a disability. Two in five persons in this age category has some form of disability, most often related to mobility or cognition. Although anyone can become disabled, some people are more likely to be or to become disabled than others. People who work in hazardous settings have higher rates of disability than workers in seemingly safer occupations. But no one is immune to disability. Many people believe that most disabilities are caused by personal behavior or catastrophic events such as serious accidents; however, illness is most closely linked to disabilities.

Environment, lifestyle, and working conditions may all contribute to either temporary or chronic disability. For example, air pollution in automobile-clogged cities leads to a higher incidence of chronic respiratory disease and lung damage, which may result in severe disability for some people. Eating certain types of foods and smoking cigarettes increase the risk for coronary and cardiovascular diseases. In contemporary industrial societies, workers in the bottom tiers of the labor market (primarily immigrant workers, other low-wage workers, and persons of color) are at the greatest risk for certain health hazards and disabilities. In technology-based work the 24/7 use of computers, tablets, smartphones, and similar devices has been shown to harm some workers’ vision; to produce joint problems such as arthritis, low-back pain, and carpal tunnel syndrome; and to place employees under high levels of stress that may result in neuroses and other mental health problems.

As shown in ■ Table 14.2, more than 30 percent of people in the United States have a chronic health condition that, given the physical, attitudinal, and financial barriers built into the social system, makes it difficult to perform one or more activities generally considered appropriate for persons of their age. This percentage refers only to the noninstitutionalized population. If people living in nursing homes and other institutional settings are considered, the percentage is significantly higher. Specific types of difficulties, such as seeing, hearing, speaking, walking, and needing assistance with certain tasks, are also shown in Table 14.2.

Among persons who acquire disabilities later in life, through disease or accidents, the social significance of their disability can be seen in how they initially respond to their symptoms and diagnosis, how they view the immediate situation and their future, and how the illness and disability affect their lives. When confronted with a disability, most people adopt one of two strategies: avoidance or vigilance. Those who use the avoidance strategy deny their condition in order to maintain hopeful images of the future and elude

TABLE 14.2 Percentage of Noninstitutionalized Adults Age 18 and Older with Disabilities in the United States

Characteristic	Percentage
With a disability	30.3
Severe	20.0
Not severe	10.3
Has difficulty or is unable to:	
See	5.1
Hear	7.1
Understand speech	2.1
Lift	10.2
Use stairs	12.1
Walk	13.4
Has difficulty or needs assistance with:	
Getting around	1.9
Getting into bed	4.8
Taking a bath or shower	4.3
Dressing	3.2
Eating	1.1
Getting to or using the toilet	1.8
Has difficulty or needs assistance with:	
Going outside the home alone	7.3
Managing money	4.5
Preparing meals	4.4
Doing housework	5.6
Taking medication	3.5

Source: Taylor, 2018

depression; for example, some individuals refuse to participate in rehabilitation following a traumatic injury because they want to pretend that the disability does not exist. By contrast, those using the vigilance strategy actively seek knowledge and treatment so that they can respond appropriately to the changes in their bodies.

The Americans with Disabilities Act and other laws seek to ensure that the population with disabilities has the opportunity to access housing, education, employment, and other activities without discrimination (Taylor, 2018). However, in many areas of life, much remains to be done to fulfill the requirements of this law and the social responsibility we have toward others in our community and world.

Sociological Perspectives on Disability

How do sociologists view disability? Those using the functionalist framework often apply Parsons's sick-role model, which is referred to as the *medical model of disability*. According to the medical model, people with disabilities become, in effect, chronic patients under the supervision of doctors and other medical personnel, subject to a doctor's orders or a program's rules and not to their own judgment. From this perspective, disability is deviance.

The deviance framework is also apparent in some symbolic interactionist perspectives. According to symbolic interactionists, people with a disability experience role ambiguity because many people equate disability with deviance. By labeling individuals with a disability as "deviant," other people can avoid them or treat them as outsiders. Society marginalizes people with a disability because they have lost old roles and statuses and are labeled as "disabled" persons (■ Figure 14.20). According to sociologist Eliot

Freidson (1965), how people are labeled results from three factors: (1) their degree of responsibility for their impairment, (2) the apparent seriousness of their condition, and (3) the perceived legitimacy of the condition. Freidson concluded that the definitions of and expectations for people with a disability are socially constructed factors.

Finally, from a conflict perspective, persons with a disability are members of a subordinate group in conflict with persons in positions of power in the government, in the health care industry, and in the rehabilitation business, all of whom are trying to control their destinies. Those in positions of power have created policies and artificial barriers that keep people with disabilities in a subservient position. Moreover, in a capitalist economy, disabilities are big business. When people with disabilities are defined as a social problem and public funds are spent to purchase goods and services for them, rehabilitation becomes a commodity that can be bought and sold by the medical-industrial complex. From this perspective, persons with a disability are objectified. They have an economic value as consumers of goods and services that will allegedly make them "better" people. Many persons with a disability endure the same struggle for resources faced by people of color, lower-income women, and older persons. Individuals who hold more than one of these ascribed statuses, combined with experiencing disability, are doubly or triply oppressed by capitalism.

Today, many working-age persons with a disability in the United States are unemployed. Most of them believe that they could and would work if offered the opportunity. However, even when persons with a severe disability are able to find jobs, they typically earn less than persons without a disability.

Employment, poverty, and disability are related. On the one hand, people may become economically disadvantaged as a result of chronic illness or disability. On the other hand, poor people are less likely to be educated and more likely to be malnourished and have inadequate access to health care—all of which contribute to risk of chronic illness, physical and mental disability, and the inability to participate in the labor force. As previously mentioned, the type of employment available to people with limited resources increases their chances of becoming disabled. They may work in hazardous places such as mines, factory assembly lines, and chemical plants or in the construction industry, where the chance of becoming seriously disabled is much higher.

Looking Ahead: Health Care in the Future

Central questions regarding the future of health care are how to provide coverage for the largest number of people and how to do this without bankrupting the entire nation. Not knowing the future of the Affordable Care Act at the time of this writing makes it difficult to predict what the future of health insurance in this country will be in the 2020s. Overall,



AP Images/Charles Dharapak

FIGURE 14.20 Disabilities are often the result of violent activity. Many veterans of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan now suffer physical and emotional disabilities that may be with them for the rest of their lives.

our best hope for good medical care is a payment system that will result in the best outcomes for the most patients at reasonable costs and thus an overall transformation of the current U.S. health care system.

A key issue in the United States is how to prevent, reduce, and best treat epidemics that affect all Americans. If we do not have a specific illness or health condition, many of us do not see that disease as being “our problem.” In the future, however, we must come to see problems such as HIV/AIDS and the reemergence of serious illnesses (largely due to the antivaccination movement) such as measles and mumps as everyone’s concern.

Another key issue in contemporary health care is the role that pharmaceuticals and advanced medical technologies play in the rising costs of health care and their usefulness as major tools for diagnosis and treatment. Technology is a major stimulus for social change, and the health care systems in high-income nations such as the United States reflect the rapid rate of technological innovation that has occurred in the last few decades. In the future, advanced health care technologies will no doubt provide even more accurate and quicker diagnosis, effective treatment techniques, and increased life expectancy.

However, technology alone cannot solve many of the problems confronting us in health and health care delivery. In fact, some aspects of technological innovation may be dysfunctional for individuals and society. As we have seen, some technological “advances” raise new ethical concerns, such as the moral and legal issues surrounding the cloning of human life. Some advances also may fail: A new prescription drug may be found to cause side effects that are more serious than the illness that it was supposed to remedy. Whether advanced technology succeeds or fails in some areas, it will probably continue to increase the cost of health care in the future. As a result, the gap between the rich and the poor in the United States will contribute to inequalities of access to vital medical services. On a global basis, new technologies may lower the death rate in some low-income countries, but it will primarily be the wealthy in those nations who will have access to the level of health care that many people in higher-income countries take for granted.

In the developing nations of the world, preventive health care and more effective and efficient health care delivery are crucial as the world’s population continues to increase and as some regions of the world are plagued by high rates of disease and poverty, a deadly combination in any setting. The concerns of the World Health Organization and other agencies must be heeded to prevent global pandemics: epidemics of infectious disease that spread through human populations across a wide region, country, continent, or the whole world. Beginning in 2019 a global pandemic of respiratory disease began to spread from person to person caused by a novel (new) coronavirus, known as “coronavirus disease 2019” or

COVID-19. Earliest detection of the virus was identified in Wuhan, China, where it was believed a link existed between the disease and people shopping in a large seafood and live animal market (animal-to-person contact). However, as the disease spread and many affected people had no exposure to animal markets, scientists concluded that the disease must be spread by person-to-person contact. This is the first global pandemic known to be caused by the emergence of a new coronavirus. As the disease spread to the United States and across much of the world, drastic public health measures were instigated, including mandatory sheltering-in-place (remaining at home and away from other people) and the use of protective gear for health care workers. In late March 2020, many U.S. schools and universities (including the author’s) were closed. As of this writing, courses are being taught only through distance learning methods, and only essential businesses are allowed to continue daily operations. For updated information and future projections, go to the [cdc.gov](https://www.cdc.gov) website.

In the future it will be necessary to direct more money and attention toward preventing major health crises rather than trying to find some way to deal with them after they develop. The *Human Development Report* (United Nations Development Programme, 2019: 80), highlights how unequal outcomes both drive and reflect unequal capabilities in health:

Parents’ income and education have profound effects on their children’s health, which in turn affect the children’s education achievement (and health in adulthood) and thus future income, if not counteracted. Hence, health gradients—disparities in health across socioeconomic groups—start at birth, or even before, and can accumulate over the lifecycle. Higher socioeconomic status families invest in health, consume more healthily and are mostly able to avoid physically and psychosocially demanding work conditions. This in turn increases the gap between low and high socioeconomic status individuals, even resulting in differences in life expectancy.

As this statement describes, across generations, an important relationship exists between income inequality and health outcomes in families that requires conscious intervention to modify and improve if people worldwide are to have a higher quality and longer quantity of life.

It goes without saying that health, illness, and health care will continue to change in the future. To a degree, health care in the future will be up to each of us. What measures will we take to safeguard ourselves against illness and disorders? How can we help others who are the victims of acute and chronic diseases or disabilities? Will we seek to have a voice in how our community, state, nation, and world deal with health care issues now and in the future?

Q&A Chapter Review

Use these questions and answers to check how well you've achieved the learning objectives set out at the beginning of this chapter.

LO1 What are the key aspects of health and health care?

Health is defined as a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being by the World Health Organization. By contrast, illness refers to an interference with good health that is reflected in differential life expectancy rates, infant mortality rates, and other indicators of the presence or absence of quantity and quality of life in a nation. Health care refers to any activity intended to improve health, while medicine is used to describe an institutionalized system for the scientific diagnosis, treatment, and prevention of illness. These terms are socially defined and may change over time and between cultures. In other words, health and illness are not only biological issues but also social issues. Studying health and health care issues around the world offers insights on illness and how political and economic forces shape health care in nations.

LO2 What is social epidemiology, and what key demographic factors are studied by social epidemiologists?

Social epidemiology is the study of the causes and distribution of health, disease, and impairment throughout a population. Typically, the target of the investigation is disease agents, the environment, and the human host (age, sex, race/ethnicity, physical condition, habits and customs, and lifestyle).

LO3 How did the profession of medicine emerge in the United States? What are the key characteristics of medicine as a profession?

During the nineteenth century, medical schools were largely proprietary institutions, and their officials were often more interested in acquiring students than in enforcing standards. Gradually, the number of medical schools was reduced, and licensing laws were established to eliminate unqualified or irregular practitioners. Although medicine had been previously viewed more as an art than as a science, several significant discoveries during the nineteenth century in areas such as bacteriology and anesthesiology began to give medicine increasing credibility as a science. Today, medicine is viewed as a profession because it has the following characteristics: abstract, specialized knowledge; autonomy that allows them to rely on their own judgment in most cases; self-regulation based on licensing, accreditation, and regulatory boards and associations that set and enforce professional standards; authority and expected

compliance with their directions; and altruism, rather than practicing only for their own self-interest.

LO4 How was U.S. health care paid for in the past, and how has the Affordable Care Act (Obamacare) changed this?

Throughout most of the past hundred years, medical care in the United States has been paid for on a fee-for-service basis. This approach to paying for medical services is expensive because few restrictions are placed on the fees that doctors, hospitals, and other medical providers can charge patients. Recently, there have been efforts at cost containment, and HMOs and managed care have produced both positive and negative results in the contemporary practice of medicine. Health maintenance organizations (HMOs) provide, for a set monthly fee, total care with an emphasis on prevention to avoid costly treatment later. Managed care is any system of cost containment that closely monitors and controls health care providers' decisions about medical procedures, diagnostic tests, and other services that should be provided to patients. The Affordable Care Act of 2010 includes measures to make insurance available to millions of persons who were previously uninsured or underinsured. However, this act, also referred to as "Obamacare," includes cost-containment measures so that health plans will have incentives to compete and keep premiums low, more control of Medicare payments, and programs that penalize hospitals when patients are readmitted too frequently, among other cost-cutting endeavors. During the Trump administration efforts have been made to eliminate or reduce the stipulations of the Affordable Care Act, but in 2020, many aspects of this law are still in effect.

LO5 How do nations such as Canada, Great Britain, and the People's Republic of China provide health services for their citizens?

Other nations have various ways in which they provide health care for their citizens. Some nations (such as Canada) have a universal health care system in which all citizens receive medical services paid for by tax revenues. Other nations (such as Great Britain) have a socialized health care system in which the government owns the medical care facilities and employs the physicians. Today, the People's Republic of China has a complex mix of market-drive capitalism, communism, and massive government spending that affects the delivery of health services in that nation. Like the United States, China has undertaken a series

of reforms to provide greater access and affordability to health care. These reforms have aimed to provide all people with universal health coverage, but this goal has not been reached in many areas, such as rural villages. Three basic types of health insurance have existed: rural and urban resident-based health insurance funded mainly by government subsidies and employee-based health insurance funded by employer and employee contributions. It remains to be seen if they will be successful in improving the quality of health care in that nation.

LO6 How has advanced medical technology changed the practice of medicine and the cost of health services? What are holistic medicine and alternative medicine?

Sociologists have identified specific social implications of some new medical technologies: Advanced technologies create options for people and for society, but these options alter human relationships. Advanced technologies increase the cost of medical care. Advanced technologies such as cloning and stem cell research raise provocative questions about the very nature of life. Holistic medicine is an approach to health care that focuses on prevention of illness and disease and is aimed at treating the whole person, both body and mind, rather than just the part or parts in which symptoms occur. Alternative medicine refers to healing practices that take a holistic approach to medicine but are either used as a complement to standard medical practice or that are inconsistent with dominant medical practice. Examples include herbal therapies, acupuncture, chiropractic medicine, massage, and spiritual healing.

LO7 How do functionalist, conflict, symbolic interactionist, and postmodern approaches differ in their analysis of health and health care?

According to the functionalist approach, if society is to function as a stable system, it is important for people to be healthy and to contribute to their society. Consequently, sickness is viewed as a form of deviant behavior that must be controlled by society. Conflict theory tends to emphasize the political, economic, and social forces that affect health and the health care delivery system. Among these issues are the ability of all people to obtain health care; how race, class, and gender inequalities affect health and health care; power relations between doctors and other health care workers; the dominance of the medical model of health care; and the role of profit in the health care system. In studying health, symbolic interactionists focus on the fact that the meaning that social actors give their illness or disease will affect their self-concept and their relationships with others. Symbolic interactionists also examine medicalization—the process whereby non-medical problems become defined and treated as illnesses

or disorders. Postmodern theorists argue that doctors and the medical establishment have gained control over illness and patients at least partly because of the physicians' clinical gaze, which replaces all other systems of knowledge.

LO8 What are the key aspects of mental disorders?

A mental disorder is defined as a condition that makes it difficult or impossible for a person to cope with everyday life. By contrast, a mental illness refers to a condition in which a person has a severe mental disorder requiring extensive treatment with medication, psychotherapy, and sometimes hospitalization.

LO9 What is a disability, and what are some key sociological perspectives on disability?

Disability is a physical or health condition that stigmatizes or causes discrimination. In viewing disability, sociologists using the functionalist framework often apply the medical model of disability. According to the medical model, people with disabilities become chronic patients under the supervision of medical personnel, subject to a doctor's orders or a program's rules and not to their own judgment. According to symbolic interactionists, people with a disability experience role ambiguity because many people equate disability with deviance. From a conflict perspective, persons with a disability are members of a subordinate group in conflict with persons in positions of power in the government, the health care industry, and the rehabilitation business, all of whom are trying to control their destinies.

LO10 What is the future of the health care system in the United States?

Many key issues face the U.S. health care system now and in the future. Many of these issues are contingent on the outcome of either the full implementation of the Affordable Care Act or the replacement of this law with some other plan or plans for financing and administering health care in this country. One key issue is how to deal with continuing crises such as the outbreak of measles, mumps, and possibly tuberculosis because of the resistance of persons opposed to vaccinating their children or taking other measures to prevent the recurrence of these supposedly eradicated diseases. Another key issue is the role of technologies and their cost for diagnosis and treatment. A final, but definitely not the only other problem facing U.S. health care, is the extent to which preventive health care is effectively implemented to reduce high rates of preventable illness with appropriate measures such as diet, exercise, or not smoking or engaging in other activities that reduce the quality of health and limit the lifespan of many people.

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Questions for Critical Thinking

- 1 Why is it important to explain the social, as well as the biological, aspects of health and illness in societies?
- 2 In what ways are race, class, and gender intertwined with physical and mental disorders?
- 3 How would functionalists, conflict theorists, and symbolic interactionists suggest that health care delivery might be improved in the United States?
- 4 Based on this chapter, how do you think illness and health care will be handled in the United States in the future? Are there things that we can learn from other nations regarding the delivery of health care? Why or why not?

Answers to Sociology Quiz

Health, Illness, and Health Care

1	False	The battle over passage of the historic health care reform law in 2010 was a reflection of how divided the United States is over universal health coverage. In the 2020s, very divisive opinions still are held about the future of the Affordable Care Act and what should be done about the provision of health care in the future.
2	False	Worldwide, most cases of HIV infection are transmitted through heterosexual contact.
3	False	The lower life expectancy of African Americans as a category is caused by a higher prevalence of life-threatening illnesses, such as cancer, heart disease, hypertension, and AIDS. Socioeconomic inequality also makes it more difficult for more African American families to provide safe housing, nutritious food, and good-quality health care for parents and their children.
4	True	Unintentional injuries account for 34.2 percent of deaths among Americans age 15–24, making unintentional injuries the most common cause of death in this age group, followed closely by homicide (32.9 percent).
5	False	Most high-income, developed nations have some form of universal health coverage, which is either provided by the government or purchased by the government.
6	False	A number of government investigations have focused on rising health care payments and allegations of fraud in the health care delivery system. Billing fraud has been found in Medicare and Medicaid payments to physicians, hospitals, nursing homes, home health agencies, medical labs, and medical equipment manufacturers.
7	False	Until recently, chronic depression and other mental conditions were most often depicted as “female” problems. However, male depression has become more widely publicized through documentaries on individuals’ lives and through advertising for antidepressants.
8	True	Overweight and obesity rates are alarmingly high in the United States, with two-thirds of U.S. adults being either overweight or obese.

Source: Based on National Center for Health Statistics, 2020.





Population and Urbanization

15

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- 1 Describe** the concept of demography and the processes that produce changes in populations.
- 2 Explain** the concepts of population composition and global population growth.
- 3 Compare** four major perspectives on population.
- 4 Compare** the major theories of international migration.
- 5 Describe** the process of urbanization, the growth of cities, and the major perspectives on urban growth.
- 6 Describe** the experience of urban life based on functionalist and conflict perspectives.
- 7 Describe** the experience of urban life based on symbolic interactionist perspectives.
- 8 Discuss** the problems of cities around the world and the growth of suburbs, edge cities, and exurban areas.
- 9 Explain** the rural community issues in the United States.
- 10 Discuss** the predictions for population and urbanization trends.

SOCIOLOGY & **Everyday Life**

The Immigration and Deportation Crisis in the United States

I feel more unsafe here [in Puebla, Mexico] than I ever did in New York. . . . Since I was deported, I hardly leave my room. All of my old friends are now involved in gangs and drugs, so I stay home.

—Jorge Vargas describes how he feels after being deported from the United States to his childhood home in central Mexico, after living in New York City from age fifteen to twenty-seven (qtd. in Roman and Andrews, 2019)

The system in Mexico blocks deportees out. You don't know where to go, what to do. When deported, you become nothing. You are nothing. . . . The United States cut my wings. . . . I felt like I was a part of New York. I grew up there. Like most Mexicans in New York, I paid taxes with a fake Social Security number for years. . . . It's been 10 years, and I have not yet readapted to Mexico. My mind plays tricks on me—sometimes I wake up and think I am still in New York, until I realize I am not.

—Juan Carlos Hernandez describes how his life has changed since he was deported from New York, the place he called home, more than 10 years ago (qtd. in Roman and Andrews, 2019)



Tribune Content Agency LLC/Alamy Stock Photo

Rocio Rebollar Gomez, mother of U.S. Army Lieutenant Gilbram Cruz, was expelled from the United States and deported to Mexico for illegally being in this country. She had lived in the United States for 31 years and ran a small business. Gomez acknowledged she had entered the United States illegally because she was desperate for her children to have a better life than they would have had in Mexico.

Her [Rocio Rebollar Gomez] as a responsible mother did what any mother in her situation would do and came back [to the United States from Mexico] to care for her

The nature and extent of immigration and the process of deportation are among the most politically and emotionally charged issues throughout the world in the twenty-first century. In the United States, concerns about the effects of immigration on cities, states, and the nation as a whole have escalated as major shifts in the population have occurred. An important, emotionally charged concern in this country is the process of *deportation*—the removal of a foreign national under immigration laws for reasons such as illegal entry or conduct dangerous to the public welfare. During the administrations of Presidents Bill Clinton, George W. Bush, and Barack Obama, hundreds of thousands of people without legal documentation were removed from the United States. This topic became exceptionally divisive when the Trump administration used more drastic measures to incarcerate and/or remove people, particularly children, who were considered to be in the country illegally. Some of the detainees were attempting to enter the country illegally; others who were detained or deported had been living in this country for many years. Such were the cases of Jose Vargas and Rocio Rebollar Gomez (described in this chapter's

opening narrative). Their cases are not isolated incidents; similar situations have been occurring throughout the United States for many years because many people clearly believe their lives will be improved if they gain entry and are able to build a new life here for themselves and their families.

Why do people migrate? Around the world, people move from one location to another for many reasons. Some individuals and families move for economic opportunities and a better life for their children; others move because they fear for their lives based on conflict, violence, and other major social, economic, and political problems occurring in their countries of origin. Why is immigration policy such a hot topic today? This is a difficult question to answer. A lack of consensus exists about the process of immigration and its causes and consequences. Some citizens and other permanent residents in a nation are adamantly opposed to immigration because of the additional problems they believe it will produce for those already living in their country. Other people believe immigration is acceptable under limited circumstances and that it is what has made some nations great. For example, the United States has often been touted as the “Land of Freedom and Opportunity.” On the other hand, the issue of immigration continues to produce a divisive

children by any means. A country that was founded on immigrants should be welcoming to my mother, who her whole life has been an outstanding citizen We never asked for any handouts. We have always provided and succeeded by ourselves. We simply ask ICE [Immigration and Customs Enforcement] to exercise some discretion and let her continue being a contributing member of her society.

—Second Lt. Gibram Cruz, Ms. Gomez’s son, who has served in the U.S. Army for five years, explains why he is dismayed that his mother was deported from the United States, a country where she had lived for thirty-one years, raised three children, and run a small business (qtd. in Taylor, 2020)

How Much Do You Know About Migration and U.S. Immigration?

TRUE	FALSE	
T	F	1 All “unauthorized immigrants” in the United States entered the country illegally.
T	F	2 Most people migrate to another country because of “push” factors that make them unhappy in their country of origin, such as poor economic conditions, political unrest, or war.
T	F	3 U.S. immigrants just arriving in this country are as likely to have college degrees as native-born Americans.
T	F	4 Immigrants increase unemployment and lower wages among native workers.
T	F	5 Most children living in undocumented immigrant families were born in the United States and are, therefore, U.S. citizens.
T	F	6 When a Gallup poll asked Americans if illegal immigrants mostly take jobs that Americans want or if they mostly take low-paying jobs that Americans don’t want, the majority of Americans indicated that they believe that most undocumented immigrants take low-paying jobs that Americans don’t want.
T	F	7 To become a naturalized U.S. citizen, immigrants must pass a basic test on English and U.S. civics (history and government).
T	F	8 Foreign-born non-U.S. citizens who marry a U.S. citizen are automatically granted U.S. citizenship.

Answers can be found at the end of the chapter.

battle over immigration laws and the need for reform. In addition to laws and administrative decisions at the federal level, a number of states in the United States have passed stringent immigration laws that have resulted in ongoing political strife and lengthy courtroom litigation. Many people remain concerned that rapid population growth and the diverse demographic characteristics of new arrivals will further harm the quality of life in this nation. People with these concerns demand more restrictive immigration laws and better enforcement of deportation policies in hopes of discouraging new arrivals from attempting to come to the United States in the first place or in ridding the country of those individuals and families that are already living here without proper legal documentation.

Clearly, immigration is an important factor in understanding the dynamics of population and urbanization; however, immigration is only one factor associated with population growth and urban change. Birthrates and death rates are also important but have received relatively little attention. In this chapter we explore the dynamics of population and urbanization, with a focus on how birthrates, death rates, and migration affect growth and change in societies such as ours. Before reading on, test your knowledge about current migration and U.S. immigration issues by taking the “Sociology and Everyday Life” quiz. ●

Demography: The Study of Population

How large is the world’s population? The world population has reached more than 7.75 billion people and continues to grow, although at a slower pace than at any time since the 1950s. Every year, the population increases by an estimated 80–89 million people when we calculate the natural increase. What is the natural increase? Births minus deaths equals the *natural increase* in population. If we break down the natural increase even further, about 220,000 people are added to the world population each day, for a rate of about 150 people each minute.

Only nine countries will make up more than half of the projected population increase between the 2020s and 2050. These countries are the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Egypt, Ethiopia, India, Indonesia, Nigeria, Pakistan, the United Republic of Tanzania, and the United States of America. See ■ Figure 15.1 to see how countries are ranked by their contribution to projected population growth.

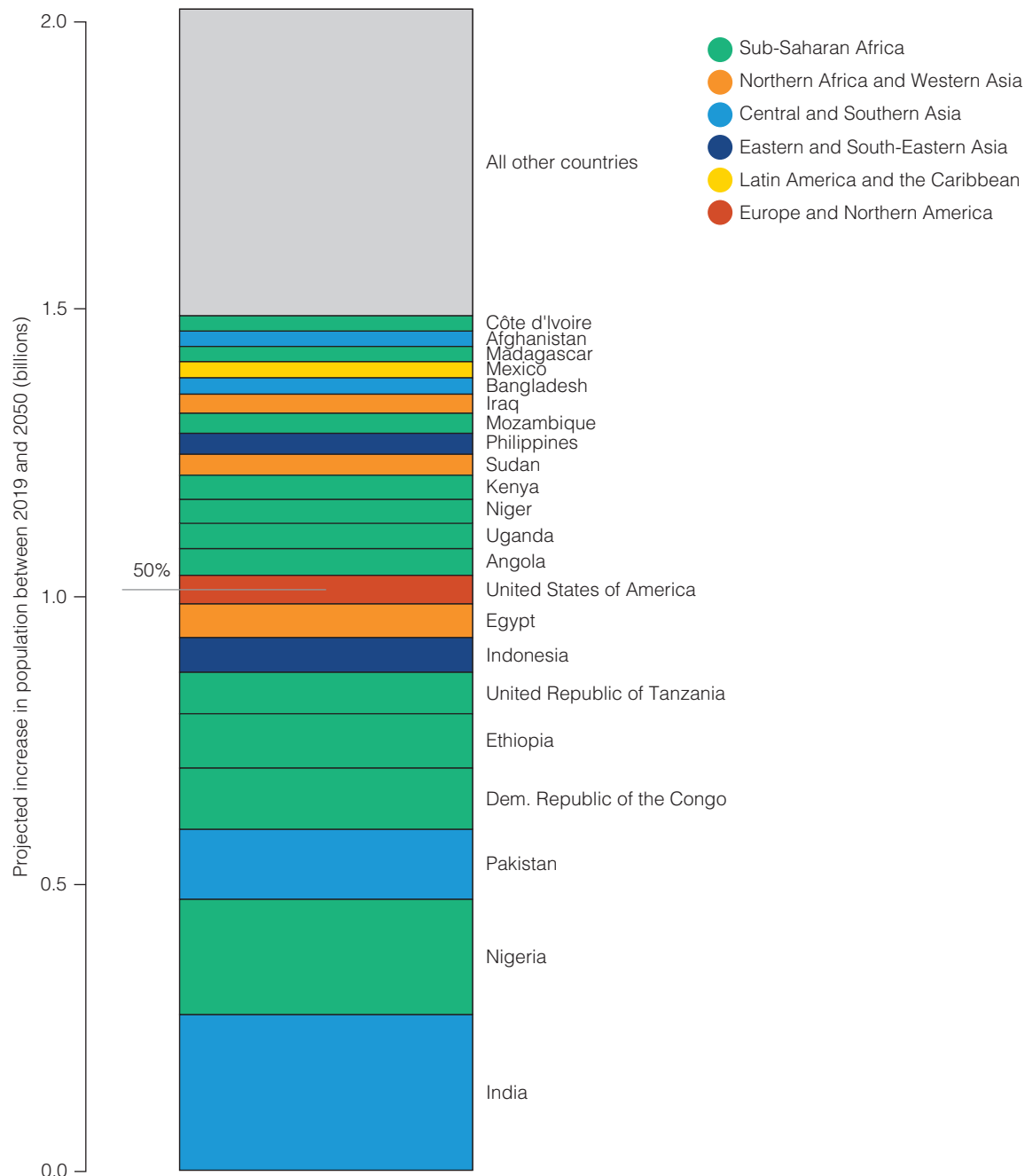


FIGURE 15.1 Projected Global Population Growth between 2019 and 2050

Twenty-two countries will account for around 1.5 billion of the total 2.0 billion people expected to be added to the world between 2019 and 2050.

Source: "From World Population Prospects 2019: Highlights (ST/ESA/SER.A/423)", by United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, © 2020 United Nations. Reprinted with the permission of the United Nations"

What causes the population to grow so rapidly? This question is of interest to scholars who specialize in the study of *demography*—a subfield of sociology that examines population size, composition, and distribution. Many sociological studies use demographic analysis as a component of the research design because all aspects of social life are affected by demography. For example, an important relationship exists between population size and the availability of food,

water, energy, and housing. Many of the fastest-growing populations are in the poorest countries of the world. This creates even more pressing challenges for sustainable development because population size, composition, and distribution are intertwined with issues such as poverty, hunger and malnutrition, and racial and ethnic conflict.

In the twenty-first century, nearly all of the world population growth is occurring in developing nations because

of high birthrates combined with younger populations. Meanwhile, birthrates in many developed nations are barely exceeding death rates because of a combination of low birthrates and a significant increase in the older populations. In the United States, for example, the rate of natural increase in 2019 fell below one million, with 3.792 million births and 2.835 million deaths, leaving a natural increase of only 0.957 million (U.S. Census Bureau, 2019h). As you will recall, the rate of natural increase does not include migration.

Increases or decreases in population can have a powerful impact on the social, economic, and political structures of societies. As used by demographers, a *population* is a group of people who live in a specified geographic area. Changes in populations occur as a result of three processes: fertility (births), mortality (deaths), and migration.

Fertility

Fertility is the actual level of childbearing for an individual or a population. The level of fertility in a society is based on biological and social factors, the primary biological factor being the number of women of childbearing age (usually between ages fifteen and forty-five). Other biological factors affecting fertility include the general health and level of nutrition of women of childbearing age. Social factors influencing the level of fertility include the roles available to women in a society and prevalent viewpoints regarding what constitutes the “ideal” family size.

Based on biological capability alone, most women could produce twenty or more children during their childbearing years. *Fecundity* is the potential number of children who could be born if every woman reproduced at her maximum biological capacity. Fertility rates are not as high as fecundity rates because people’s biological capabilities are limited by social factors such as practicing voluntary abstinence and refraining from sexual intercourse until an older age, as well as by contraception, voluntary sterilization, abortion, and infanticide. Additional social factors affecting fertility include significant changes in the number of available partners for sex and/or marriage (as a result of war, for example), increases in the number of women of childbearing age in the workforce, and high rates of unemployment.

In some countries, governmental policies affect the fertility rate. For example, until the end of 2015, the People’s Republic of China had family-planning restrictions that allowed only one child per family in order to limit population growth in light of a population explosion that occurred between 1949 and 1976, when the population almost doubled. This policy meant that many families that favored male infants, often at the expense of females, would use various means to ensure that if they could have only one child, it would be a male. Over time, this created a shifting gender demographic, and some young men were having difficulty finding female spouses unless they imported them from other countries. Although it is difficult to tell how passage and eventual elimination of the one-child policy will affect

the population in China now and in the future, strong evidence currently suggests that this policy contributed to a rapidly aging population in China that will require more services to a shrinking workforce, both problematic for the future of the Chinese economy.

The most basic measure of fertility is the **crude birthrate**—the number of live births per 1,000 people in a population in a given year. The crude birthrate in the United States was 12.4 per 1,000 in 2018, as compared with an all-time high rate of 27 per 1,000 in 1947 (following World War II) (*CIA World Factbook*, 2019c). This measure is referred to as a “crude” birthrate because it is based on the entire population and is not “refined” to incorporate significant variables affecting fertility, such as age, marital status, religion, and race/ethnicity.

The United Nations (2019b) divides countries into three categories based on fertility levels:

1. *Low-fertility countries*, where women are not having enough children to ensure that, on average, each woman is replaced by a daughter who survives to the age when she will be old enough to have children. Low-fertility countries include all of Europe and North America and Australia and New Zealand. Among the populous low-fertility countries are China, the United States, Brazil, Bangladesh, the Russian Federation, Japan, and Vietnam.
2. *Intermediate-fertility countries*, where each woman is having, on average, between 2.1 and four births over a lifetime. In 2019, around 40 percent of the world’s population lived in intermediate-fertility countries. These countries include India, Indonesia, Pakistan, Mexico, the Philippines, and Egypt.
3. *High-fertility countries*, where the average woman has four or more live births. Of the thirty-six countries or areas with fertility levels above four births per woman in 2019, thirty-three of those countries are located in sub-Saharan Africa, with the largest countries being Nigeria, Ethiopia, the Democratic Republic of Congo, the United Republic of Tanzania, Uganda, and Sudan.

Obviously, high-fertility countries will potentially add the most to future population growth. However, it is difficult to estimate how much the world’s population will *actually* increase over the next century because even small differences in fertility levels that are sustained over long periods of time can have a major effect on population size.

demography

a subfield of sociology that examines population size, composition, and distribution.

fertility

the actual level of childbearing for an individual or a population.

crude birthrate

the number of live births per 1,000 people in a population in a given year.

In most areas of the world, women are having fewer children. Women who have larger numbers of children tend to live in agricultural regions of the world, where children’s labor is essential to the family’s economic survival and child mortality rates are very high. However, in some countries, families need to have many children in order to ensure that one or two will live to adulthood because of high rates of poverty, malnutrition, and disease.

Mortality

The primary cause of world population growth in recent years has been a decline in *mortality*—the incidence of death in a population. The simplest measure of mortality is the *crude death rate*—the number of deaths per 1,000 people in a population in a given year. The estimated United States crude death rate for 2018 was 8.2 deaths per 1,000 population. In high-income, developed nations, such as the United States, mortality rates have declined dramatically as diseases such as malaria, polio, cholera, tetanus, and typhoid have been virtually eliminated by vaccinations and improved sanitation and personal hygiene. The leading causes of deaths in most regions of the world are noncommunicable diseases such as cardiovascular diseases, cancer, diabetes, and chronic lung diseases. (The ten leading causes of death in the United States in 1900 and 2019 are shown in ■ Table 15.1.) In regions such as sub-Saharan Africa, infectious diseases remain the leading cause of death, as mortality rates remain high as a result of HIV/AIDS.

Longevity gaps between shortest- and longest-lived populations worldwide are often related to the mortality

rate of children under the age of five. Many children do not survive long enough to contract communicable diseases. On a global basis, large numbers of newborn infants do not live to see their first birthday. The measure of these deaths is referred to as the *infant mortality rate*, which is the number of deaths of infants under one year of age per 1,000 live births in a given year. The infant mortality rate worldwide is estimated at 32 per 1,000 live births (CIA World Factbook, 2019d). In the United States, the infant mortality rate was estimated at 5.7 per 1,000 live births in 2018 (CIA World Factbook, 2019c). The five leading causes of infant death in the United States are birth defects, preterm birth and low birth weight, maternal pregnancy complications, sudden infant death syndrome, and injuries such as suffocation (U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2019e). The infant mortality rate is an important reflection of a society’s level of preventive (prenatal) medical care, maternal nutrition, childbirth procedures, and neonatal care for infants. In the United States the infant mortality rate has not changed significantly in recent years. Among other factors, differential levels of access to prenatal counseling and medical services are often reflected in the divergent infant mortality rates worldwide.

Life expectancy is an estimate of the average lifetime in years of people born in a specific year, as discussed in Chapter 14. Worldwide, life expectancy in 2018 was 69.8 years. Male life expectancy was 67.8 years, as compared to 72 years for females. Compare these figures to U.S. life expectancy at 80.1 years total and 77.8 years for males and 82.3 years for females (CIA World Factbook, 2019c). Disparities exist among racial groups and educational categories. Studies in the second decade of the twenty-first century have found that adult men and women in the United States with fewer than twelve years of education have life expectancies that are about the same as adults in the 1950s and 1960s. When combined with race, the disparity grows even wider: White (non-Hispanic) women and men with sixteen years or more of schooling have life expectancies far greater than African Americans with fewer than twelve years of education. Between white men and African American men, the difference is 14.2 additional years of life expectancy for white men. Between white women and African American women, the difference is 10.3 years more for white women.

How might educational attainment influence life expectancy? The knowledge and skills people acquire in school often informs them on health-related issues that are important to physical and mental well-being. Higher levels of education provide more opportunities to gain stable, well-paid careers that include health insurance, paid sick leave and vacations, and pension plans for their later years. Persons who are highly educated may also avoid health-related risk factors and instead engage in health-enhancing behaviors, such as smoking cessation, alcohol abstinence, and regular physical exercise because they have learned about the negative consequences of certain kinds of behavior.

TABLE 15.1 The Ten Leading Causes of Death in the United States, 1900 and 2019

Cause of Death—1900	Rank	Cause of Death—2019
Influenza/pneumonia	1	Heart disease
Tuberculosis	2	Cancer (malignant neoplasms)
Stomach/intestinal disease	3	Accidents (unintentional injuries)
Heart disease	4	Chronic lower respiratory diseases
Cerebral hemorrhage	5	Stroke (cerebrovascular diseases)
Kidney disease	6	Alzheimer’s disease
Accidents	7	Diabetes mellitus
Cancer	8	Influenza and pneumonia
Diseases in early infancy	9	Kidney disease
Diphtheria	10	Suicide (intentional self-harm)

Source: Nichols, 2019

Migration

Migration is the movement of people from one geographic area to another for the purpose of changing residency. Migration affects the size and distribution of the population in a given area. *Distribution* refers to the physical location of people throughout a geographic area. In the United States, people are not evenly distributed throughout the country; many of us live in densely populated areas. *Density* is the number of people living in a specific geographic area. In urbanized areas, density may be measured by the number of people who live per room, per block, or per square mile. In the borough of Manhattan in New York City, the population density has been estimated to be 66,940 people per square mile, which is the highest of any county in the United States.

Migration may be either international (movement between two nations) or internal (movement within national boundaries). Internal migration has occurred throughout U.S. history and has significantly changed the distribution of the population over time.

Migration involves two types of movement: immigration and emigration. *Immigration* is the movement of people into a geographic area to take up residency. Although immigration to the United States has continued steadily since the 1970s, as noted earlier, political and economic conditions in this century have reduced the flow of both legal and unauthorized immigration to the United States. Each year, more than one million people obtain legal permanent residence (LPR) in the United States. In 2018, for example, nearly 1.1 million persons became legal permanent residents of this country, and just over half of these were already living in the United States. About two-thirds were granted LPR status based on family relationship with a U.S. citizen or legal permanent resident of the United States. The leading countries of origin of new LPRs were Mexico, Cuba, and the People's Republic of China (U.S. Department of Homeland Security, 2019). Although the immigrant population continues to grow, important changes have occurred in the process since the 2016 presidential election brought the Trump administration into the White House. For example, in the past most immigrants came from Mexico, but in the 2020s, many immigrants arrive from Asia and are more likely to have a college degree. As deportations have increased in the United States, the size of the undocumented ("illegal") population appears to be decreasing.

Immigration rates are not an accurate reflection of the actual number of immigrants who enter a country, and those data that are available are often a number of years old. For example, in January 2020, the latest figures available were from 2017 when there were more than 44.5 million immigrants residing in the United States. The U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service records only legal immigration based on entry visas and change-of-immigration-status forms. Similarly, few records are maintained regarding *emigration*—the movement of people out of a geographic area to take up residency elsewhere.

To determine the net migration in a geographic area, the number of people leaving that area to take up permanent or semipermanent residence elsewhere (emigrants) is subtracted from the number of people entering that area to take up residence there (immigrants), unless more people are moving out of the area than into it, in which case the mathematical process is reversed. It is estimated that the net immigration rate in the United States in the 2010s was between 3.15 and 3.90 per 1,000 population (Migration Policy Institute, 2019a).

Why do people migrate? There are two key reasons why individuals and families migrate: People migrate either voluntarily or involuntarily. Voluntary migration is often related to pull factors. *Pull* factors at the international level—such as a democratic government, religious freedom, employment opportunities, or a more temperate climate—may draw voluntary immigrants into a nation. Within nations, people from large cities may be pulled to rural areas by lower crime rates, more space, and a lower cost of living. Some people are drawn by pull factors such as greater economic opportunities at their destination and are pushed by factors such as low wages and few employment opportunities in their previous place of residence. *Push* factors at the international level—such as political unrest, violence, war, famine, plagues, and natural disasters—may encourage people to leave one area and relocate elsewhere. Push factors in regional U.S. migration include unemployment, harsh weather conditions, a high cost of living, inadequate school systems, and high crime rates (■ Figure 15.2).

Involuntary, or forced, migration usually occurs as a result of political oppression, such as when Jews fled Nazi Germany in the 1930s or when Afghans left their country to escape oppression there in the early 2000s. Slavery is the most striking example of involuntary migration; for example, the 10–20 million Africans forcibly transported to the Western Hemisphere prior to 1800 did not come by choice.

Where do we stand on immigration and citizenship issues in the United States in the twenty-first century? During the Obama administration, it was thought that immigration, particularly for specific groups already residing in the United States, might become the path to citizenship. However, this has proven to be a false assumption with the election of President Donald Trump in 2016 when as a candidate he first proposed building a more restrictive border wall between the United States and Mexico, and

mortality

the incidence of death in a population.

crude death rate

the number of deaths per 1,000 people in a population in a given year.

migration

the movement of people from one geographic area to another for the purpose of changing residency.



Chris Hondros/Getty Images



XerGate/Alamy Stock Photo

FIGURE 15.2 Political unrest, violence, and war are “push” factors that encourage people to leave their country of origin. By contrast, job opportunities, such as construction work in the United States, are a major “pull” factor for people from low-income countries.

later “Build the Wall” became a rallying cry throughout his administration (■ Figure 15.3). At the beginning of 2020, nearly one hundred miles of the new border wall system had been built, with about three hundred fifty miles of border-crossing area remaining to be walled (Da Silva, 2019).

What about young people who have been illegally brought into the United States by their parents when they were infants or children? During the Obama era, many people thought that there might be an opportunity for young undocumented immigrants who arrived in the United States as children, often referred to as the “Dreamers,” to become citizens in five years after they applied to do so. “DREAM” stood for Development, Relief and Education for

Alien Minors, which was the federal act proposed by the Obama administration (■ Figure 15.4). However, it did not pass in Congress and then was dismissed altogether when Trump entered office. As a result, many college students with undocumented immigrant status have been negatively affected by the failure of the DREAM Act and subsequent anti-Dreamers sentiment encouraged by the Trump administration. According to media reports, some Dreamers have been deported from the country, but exact data on how many people have been affected is difficult to find.

What occurred regarding immigration and refugee resettlement during the Trump administration? Between 2017 and 2019, the Trump administration overhauled



Spencer Platt/Getty Images

FIGURE 15.3 This fence between Mexico and the United States has been the subject of extensive media attention and public controversy. Although not a continuous fence, the barriers—combined with a “virtual fence” of sensors and cameras monitored by the U.S. Border Patrol—are designed to prevent illegal migration between the two countries.

some components of the legal immigration system and asylum policies in the United States. Many of the policies were successful, at least from a numerical standpoint. In May 2019, the U.S. Border Patrol reported that it had apprehended more than 133,000 migrants seeking entry into the United States. The Trump administration also succeeded in putting in place the “Remain in Mexico” program in which the United States returned about 56,000 asylum-seekers to Mexico to wait for their requested U.S. immigration proceedings. Unfortunately, thousands of people were temporarily sheltered in overcrowded quarters without adequate food, clothing, or medicine in cities with high crime rates, where some of them were subjected to violence and even death (Montoya-Galvez, 2020). Too many immigration-related policies were implemented by the Trump administration to discuss here, but if this topic interests you, conduct an online search about how the



FIGURE 15.4 How do media representations affect your views on legal and illegal immigration in the United States?

Trump administration sought to dissuade immigration to the United States.

Refugees are a type of migrant that affects population size and composition in a nation. *Refugees* are persons who are outside their country of origin seeking safety because they are fleeing violence or persecution in their home countries. Until recently, the United States had the most refugees of all the nations in the world. However, U.S. refugee policies changed dramatically to reduce the maximum number of refugees admitted to the United States. In 2020, the United States would receive the lowest number admitted since 1980 when the refugee resettlement program was created by the U.S. Congress (Krogstad and Noe-Bustamante, 2019). The Trump administration issued an executive order with an 18,000-person cap for 2020 on refugee resettlement where, in the past, as many as 116,000 refugees arrived in this country each year, especially prior to the September 11 terrorist attacks (Krogstad and Noe-Bustamante, 2019). The top states for U.S. refugee resettlement in 2019 included Texas, Washington, New York, California, Kentucky, Ohio, North Carolina, Arizona, Georgia, and Michigan. However, in 2019 an executive order by the Trump Administration authorized state and local officials to make their own decisions about whether their locale would accommodate refugee resettlement. Consequently, about forty states agreed that they would accommodate refugees while others, including Texas, informed the Trump administration that Texas would no longer participate in refugee resettlement, choosing instead to concentrate its resources on people already residing in Texas (Aguilar, 2020). Since Texas is also one of the states where the border wall is being built or enhanced and one in which immigration officials have severely cracked down on the number of undocumented immigrants coming into and/or remaining in the state, the number of undocumented migrants has been reduced considerably in recent years. Texas statistics are also

affected by the “Remain in Mexico” policy because many people who previously would have waited in Texas for their immigration hearing were now waiting in Mexico before they were allowed to apply for protection in the United States (Aguilar, 2020).

Although our discussion has focused on how immigration and refugee resettlement affect the United States, many other nations face similar issues and feel the need to act against migration to their country (see this chapter’s “Sociology in Global Perspective” box). More nations are passing stringent laws to regulate immigration and make it easier to remove undocumented persons from within their nations’ borders. Various factors—such as lack of jobs and poor economic conditions, fear of violence and terrorism, and concerns about how to provide an adequate social safety net for citizens—contribute to the belief that immigration and refugee resettlement damage the existing social order.

Population Composition

Changes in fertility, mortality, and migration affect the **population composition**—the biological and social characteristics of a population, including age, sex, race, marital status, education, occupation, income, and size of household.

One measure of population composition is the **sex ratio**—the number of males for every hundred females in a given population. A sex ratio of 100 indicates an equal number of males and females in the population. If the number is greater than one hundred, there are more males than females; if it is less than one hundred, there are more females than males. In the United States the sex ratio in 2014 was 97, which means that there were 97 males per 100 females. Although approximately 124 males are conceived for every 100 females, male fetuses miscarry at a higher rate. At birth, there are 105 males for every 100 females, but because males at all ages generally have higher mortality rates than females, the sex ratio declines with age. In the 25–54 age category, the sex ratio in 2014 was 100, meaning that for every 100 men in that age category, there were 100 women. However, by age sixty-five and older, the sex ratio was 77, meaning that for every 100 women age sixty-five and older, there were only 77 men in this age category.

For demographers, sex and age are significant population characteristics; they are key indicators of fertility and mortality rates. The age distribution of a population has a direct bearing on the demand for schooling, health, employment,

population composition

the biological and social characteristics of a population, including age, sex, race, marital status, education, occupation, income, and size of household.

sex ratio

the number of males for every hundred females in a given population.

housing, and pensions. The current distribution of a population can be depicted in a **population pyramid**—a graphic representation of the distribution of a population by sex and age. Population pyramids are a series of bar graphs divided into five-year age cohorts: The left side of the pyramid shows the number or percentage of males in each age bracket; the right side provides the same information for females.

The age/sex distribution in the United States and other high-income nations does not have the appearance of a classic pyramid, but rather is more rectangular or barrel shaped. By contrast, low-income nations, such as Mexico and Iran, which have high fertility and mortality rates, do fit the classic population pyramid. ■ Figure 15.5 compares the demographic composition of Mexico, Iran, the United States, and France.

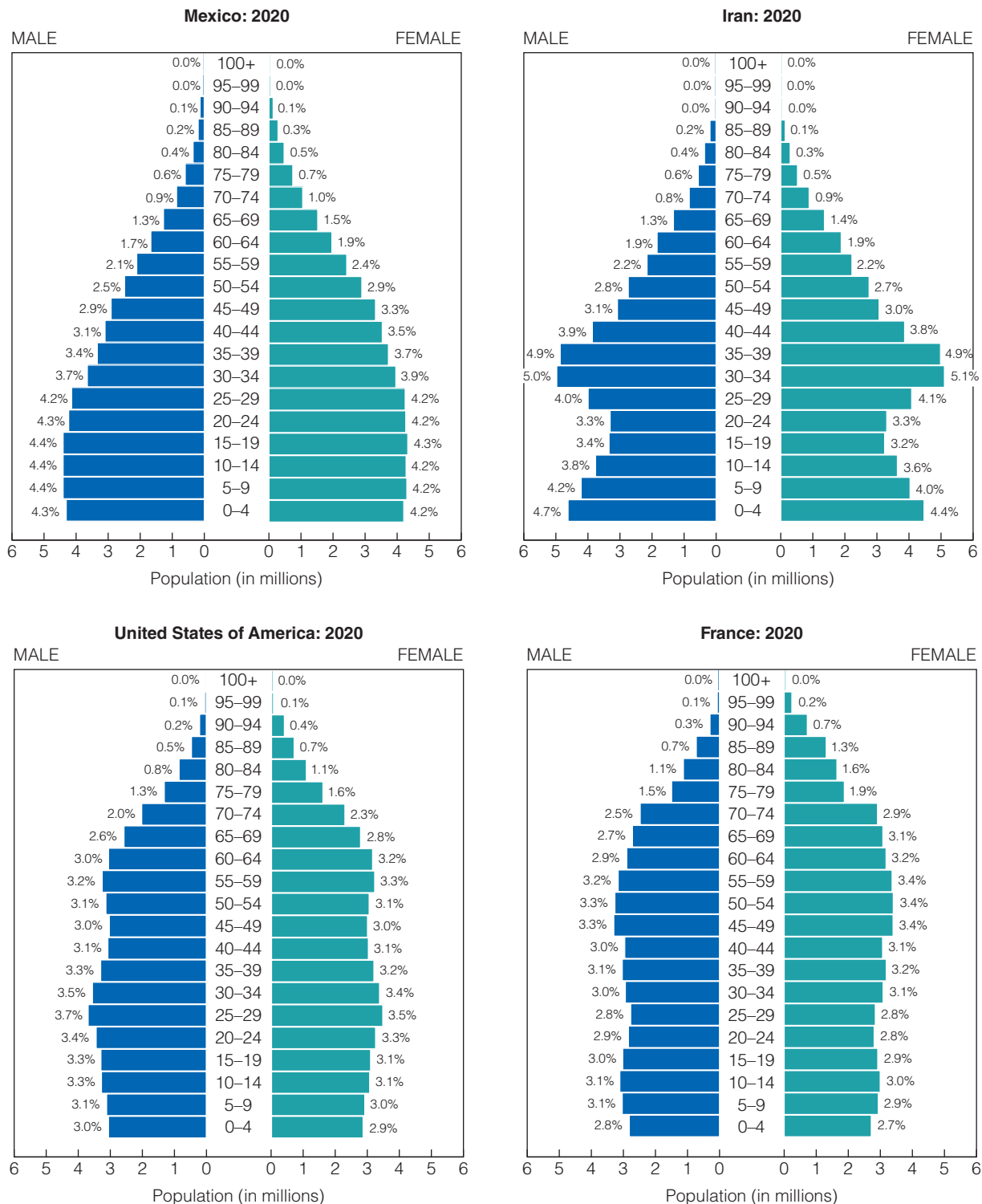


FIGURE 15.5 Population Pyramids for Mexico, Iran, the United States, and France, 2020

Source: PopulationPyramid.net, 2020.

Population Growth in Global Context

What are the consequences of global population growth? Scholars do not agree on the answer to this question. Some biologists have warned that Earth is a finite ecosystem that cannot support the global population of 9.3 billion people predicted by 2050 or the population of more than 10 billion people predicted by the end of this century. However, some economists have emphasized that free-market capitalism is capable of developing innovative ways to solve such problems. The debate is not a new one; for several centuries, strong opinions have been voiced about the effects of population growth on human welfare.

The Malthusian Perspective

English clergyman and economist Thomas Robert Malthus (1766–1834) was one of the first scholars to systematically study the effects of population. Displeased with societal changes brought about by the Industrial Revolution in England, Malthus (1965/1798: 7) anonymously published *An Essay on the Principle of Population, As It Affects the Future Improvement of Society*, in which he argued that “the power of population is infinitely greater than the power of the earth to produce subsistence [food] for man.”

According to Malthus, the population, if left unchecked, would exceed the available food supply. He argued that the population would increase in a geometric (exponential) progression (2, 4, 8, 16...) while the food supply would increase only by an arithmetic progression (1, 2, 3, 4...). In other words, a *doubling effect* occurs: Two parents can have four children, sixteen grandchildren, and so on, but food production increases by only one acre at a time. Thus, population growth inevitably surpasses the food supply, and the lack of food ultimately ends population growth and perhaps eliminates the existing population. Even in a best-case scenario, overpopulation results in poverty and other forms of deprivation.

However, Malthus suggested that this disaster might be averted by either positive or preventive checks on population. *Positive checks* are mortality risks, such as famine, disease, and war; *preventive checks* are limits to fertility. For Malthus, the only acceptable preventive check was *moral restraint*; people should practice sexual abstinence before marriage and postpone marriage as long as possible in order to have only a few children.

Malthus has had a lasting impact on the field of population studies. Most demographers refer to his dire predictions when they examine the relationship between fertility and subsistence needs. Overpopulation is still a daunting problem that capitalism and technological advances thus far have not solved, especially in middle- and low-income nations with rapidly growing populations and very limited resources.

The Marxist Perspective

Among those who attacked the ideas of Malthus were Karl Marx and Frederick Engels. According to Marx and Engels, the food supply is not threatened by overpopulation; technologically, it is possible to produce the food and other goods needed to meet the demands of a growing population. Marx and Engels viewed poverty as a consequence of the exploitation of workers by the owners of the means of production. For example, they argued that England had poverty because the capitalists skimmed off some of the workers' wages as profits. The labor of the working classes was used by capitalists to earn profits, which, in turn, were used to purchase machinery that could replace the workers rather than supply food for all. From this perspective, overpopulation occurs because capitalists desire to have a surplus of workers (an industrial reserve army) in order to suppress wages and force workers concerned about losing their livelihoods to be more productive.

According to some contemporary economists, the greatest crisis today facing low-income nations is capital shortage, not food shortage. Through technological advances, agricultural production has reached the level at which it can meet the food needs of the world if food is distributed efficiently. *Capital shortage* refers to the lack of adequate money or property to maintain a business; it is a problem because the physical capital of the past no longer meets the needs of modern economic development. In the past, self-contained rural economies survived on local labor, using local materials to produce the capital needed for other laborers. For example, in a typical village a carpenter made the loom needed by the weaver to make cloth. Today, in the global economy the one-to-one exchange between the carpenter and the weaver is lost. With an antiquated, locally made loom, the weaver cannot compete against electronically controlled, mass-produced looms. Therefore, the village must purchase capital from the outside, using its own meager financial resources. In the process the complementary relationship between labor and capital is lost; modern technology brings with it steep costs and results in village noncompetitiveness and underemployment.

Marx and Engels made a significant contribution to the study of demography by suggesting that poverty, not overpopulation, is the most important issue with regard to food supply in a capitalist economy. Although Marx and Engels offer an interesting counterpoint to Malthus, some scholars argue that the Marxist perspective is self-limiting because it attributes the population problem solely to capitalism. In actuality, nations with socialist economies also have demographic trends similar to those in capitalist societies.

population pyramid

a graphic representation of the distribution of a population by sex and age.

SOCIOLOGY in Global Perspective

Global Diaspora and the Migrant Crisis in India and Other Countries

Facts on global diaspora:

- India is the country of origin for the largest diaspora in the world (17.5 million persons in 2019).
- India leads in international migration because of economic and social distress or discrimination experienced by people who disagreed with current government policies or who are religious minorities, such as Christians and Muslims.
- However, students, families, skilled employees, and unskilled workers who are negatively affected by dishonest labor cartels are the most likely to migrate.
- Mexico, China, Russia, Syria, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Ukraine, the Philippines, and Afghanistan are other countries of origin with the largest numbers of international migrants (*Economic Times*, 2019).

Are you familiar with the term *diaspora*? Here's a little background: Although it was originally used to describe the Jews exiled from Israel by the Babylonians in the fifth century BCE, many social scientists today use the word *diaspora* to refer to a large group of people who possess a similar heritage or homeland but who live outside of it because they have decided to pursue some goal that is not readily available in their country, such as educational or economic opportunities. In other cases, they have been

forced to move—forced displacement or exile—from their country of origin. Diasporas include not only first-generation emigrants but also foreign-born children who maintain some connection with their parents' home country through cultural, linguistic, religious, or other ties. Sometimes this involves sending money or other resources by those in the diaspora back to their relatives in the country of origin.

What will happen as people continue to transverse the world looking for a better place to live and work? This is an important question, but the answer is unknown. Much like political debate on immigration and refugee resettlement in the United States, spokespersons for other nations continue to argue about how to deal with the unprecedented flow of migrants into their various countries. Regardless of these endless debates, the key issue remains: How should nations deal with immigration brought about by extreme *push factors* such as poverty, persecution, violence, and war, as well as *pull factors* such as a chance for safety, a better life, and more economic stability? Are there national and international policies that might be implemented to deal with the global diaspora that continues to unfold in the third decade of the twenty-first century? Why or why not?

Reflect & Analyze

Are you familiar with policy debates and laws that deal with immigration in your own state and/or nation? What do you think might be done to protect the rights of all people—both permanent residents and individuals who enter a country legally or illegally? Is this a major policy dilemma of our era? Explain your answer.

The Neo-Malthusian Perspective

More recently, *neo-Malthusians* (or “new Malthusians”) have reemphasized the dangers of overpopulation. To neo-Malthusians, Earth is a “dying planet” with too many people and too little food, compounded by environmental degradation and overconsumption. The 1968 publication of Paul R. Ehrlich's *The Population Bomb* launched a worldwide discussion about the effects of overpopulation and rapid population growth. “The Population Bomb Revisited,” published forty years later, reasserted the growing importance of the demographic element in the human predicament: “[t]he Earth's finite capacity to sustain human civilization” (Ehrlich and Ehrlich, 2009: 63). In other words, overpopulation and rapid population growth result in global environmental problems, ranging from global warming and rain-forest destruction to famine and vulnerability to epidemics (Ehrlich and Ehrlich, 2009). Unless significant changes are made—including improving the status of women, reducing racism and religious prejudice, reforming the agriculture system,

and shrinking the growing gap between rich and poor—the consequences will be dire (Ehrlich and Ehrlich, 2009).

Early neo-Malthusians published birth control handbooks, and widespread acceptance of birth control eventually reduced the connection between people's sexual conduct and fertility. Later neo-Malthusians have encouraged people to be part of the solution to the problem of overpopulation by having only one or two children in order to bring about **zero population growth**—the point at which no population increase occurs from year to year because the number of births plus immigrants is equal to the number of deaths plus emigrants.

Today, the Ehrlich proposal remains the same: “Adopt policies that gradually reduce birthrates and eventually start a global decline toward a human population size that is sustainable in the long run” (Ehrlich and Ehrlich, 2009). Ironically, some of these ideas are being widely disputed today as scholars realize that many countries are going to have populations with many older people and fewer young people to help balance the needs of societies.

Demographic Transition Theory

Some scholars who disagree with the neo-Malthusian viewpoint suggest that the theory of demographic transition offers a more accurate picture of future population growth. **Demographic transition** is the process by which some societies have moved from high birth and death rates to relatively low birth and death rates as a result of technological development. Demographic transition is linked to four stages of economic development (see ■ Figure 15.6):

- **Stage 1: Preindustrial societies.** Little population growth occurs because high birthrates are offset by high death rates. Food shortages, poor sanitation, and lack of adequate medical care contribute to high rates of infant and child mortality.
- **Stage 2: Early industrialization.** Significant population growth occurs because birthrates are relatively high whereas death rates decline. Improvements in health, sanitation, and nutrition produce a substantial decline in infant mortality rates. Overpopulation is likely to occur because more people are alive than the society has the ability to support.
- **Stage 3: Advanced industrialization and urbanization.** Very little population growth occurs because both birthrates and death rates are low. The birthrate declines as couples control their fertility through contraceptives and become less likely to adhere to religious directives against their use. Children are not viewed as an economic asset; they consume income rather than produce it. Societies in this stage attain zero population growth, but the actual number of births per year may still rise because of an increased number of women of childbearing age.
- **Stage 4: Postindustrialization.** Birthrates continue to decline as more women gain full-time employment and the cost of raising children continues to increase. The population grows very slowly, if at all, because the decrease in birthrates is coupled with a stable death rate.

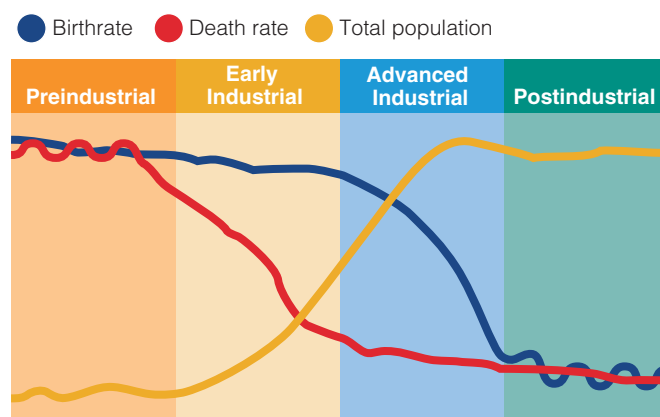


FIGURE 15.6 The Demographic Transition

Debate continues about whether this evolutionary model accurately explains the stages of population growth in all societies. Advocates note that demographic transition theory highlights the relationship between technological development and population growth, thus making Malthus's predictions obsolete. Scholars also point out that demographic transitions occur at a faster rate in now-low-income nations than they previously did in the nations that are already developed. For example, nations in the process of development have higher birthrates and death rates than the now-developed societies did when they were going through the transition. The death rates declined in the now-developed nations as a result of internal economic development—not, as is the case today, through improved methods of disease control. Critics suggest that this theory best explains development in Western societies.

Other Perspectives on Population Change

In recent decades, other scholars have continued to develop theories about how and why changes in population growth patterns occur. Some have studied the relationship between economic development and a decline in fertility; others have focused on the process of secularization—the decline in the significance of the sacred in daily life—and how a change from believing that otherworldly powers are responsible for one's life to a sense of responsibility for one's own well-being is linked to a decline in fertility. Based on this premise, some analysts argue that the processes of industrialization and economic development are typically accompanied by secularization but that the relationship between these factors is complex when it comes to changes in fertility.

Shifting from the macrolevel to the microlevel, education and social-psychological factors also play into the decisions that individuals make about how many children to have. Family planning information is more readily available to people with more years of formal education and may cause them to engage in decision making in accord with *rational choice theory*, which is based on the assumption that people make decisions based on a calculated cost-benefit analysis (“What do I gain and lose from a specific action?”). In low-income countries or other settings in which children are identified as an economic resource for their parents throughout life, fertility rates are higher than in higher-income countries. However, as modernization and urbanization occur in such societies, the positive economic effects of having more children may be offset by the cost of caring for those children and the lowered economic advantage gained from having children in an industrialized nation.

zero population growth

the point at which no population increase occurs from year to year.

demographic transition

the process by which some societies have moved from high birth and death rates to relatively low birth and death rates as a result of technological development.

As demographers have reformulated the demographic transition theory, they have highlighted additional factors that are likely to be causes of fertility decline, and they have suggested that demographic transition is not just one process but rather a set of intertwined transitions. One is the epidemiological transition—the shift from deaths at younger ages because of acute, communicable diseases. Another is the fertility transition—the shift from natural fertility to controlled fertility, resulting in a decrease in the fertility rate. Other transitions include the migration transition, the urban transition, the age transition, and the family and household transition, which occur as a result of lower fertility, a longer life, an older age structure, and a predominantly urban residence.

A Brief Glimpse at International Migration Theories

Why do people relocate from one nation to another? Several major theories have been developed in an attempt to explain international migration. The *neoclassical economic approach* assumes that migration patterns occur based on geographic differences in the supply of and demand for labor. The United States and other high-income countries that have had growing economies and a limited supply of workers for certain types of jobs have paid higher wages than are available in areas with a less-developed economy and a large labor force. As a result, people move to gain higher wages and sometimes better living conditions. They may also take jobs in other countries so that they can send money to their families in their country of origin.

Unlike the neoclassical explanation of migration, which focuses on individual decision making, the *new households economics of migration approach* emphasizes the part that entire families or households play in the migration process. From this approach, international workers' temporary migration to the United States would be examined not only from the perspective of the individual worker but also in terms of what the entire family gains from the process of having one or more migrant family members work in another country. By having a diversity of family income (originating from more than one source), the family is cushioned from the economic woes of the nation that most of the family members think of as "home."

Two conflict perspectives on migration add to our knowledge of why people migrate. Split-labor-market theory suggests that immigrants from low-income countries are often recruited for secondary labor market positions: dead-end jobs with low wages, unstable employment, and sometimes

hazardous working conditions. By contrast, migrants from higher-income countries may migrate for primary-sector employment—jobs in which well-educated workers are paid high wages and receive benefits such as health insurance and a retirement plan (■ Figure 15.7). The global migration of some high-tech workers is an example of this process, whereas the migration of farmworkers and construction helpers is an example of secondary labor market migration.

Finally, world systems theory (discussed later in this chapter) views migration as linked to the problems caused by capitalist development around the world. As the natural resources, land, and workforce in low-income countries with little or no industrialization have come under the influence of international markets, there has been a corresponding flow of migrants from those nations to the highly industrialized, high-income countries, especially those with which the poorer nations have had the most economic, political, or military contact.

After flows of migration commence, the pattern may continue because potential migrants have personal ties with relatives and friends who now live in the country of destination and can serve as a source of stability when the potential migrants relocate to the new country. Known as *network theory*, this approach suggests that once migration has begun, it takes on a life of its own and that the migration pattern that ensues may be different from the original push or pull factors that produced the earlier migration. Another approach, *institutional theory*, suggests that migration may be fostered by groups—such as humanitarian aid organizations relocating refugees or smugglers bringing people into a country illegally—and that the actions of these groups may produce a larger stream of migrants than would otherwise be the case.

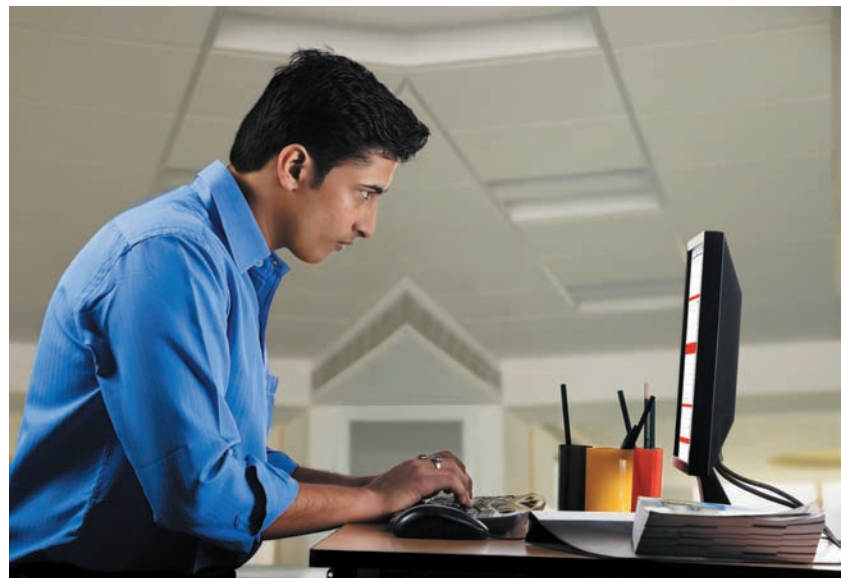


FIGURE 15.7 Migrants from other high-income countries often move to the United States to gain primary-sector jobs, such as in the high-tech industry, where workers are paid high wages and receive generous benefit packages. How does this affect migration patterns in both the countries of origin and countries of destination?

As you can see from these diverse approaches to explaining contemporary patterns of migration, the reasons that people migrate are numerous and complex, involving processes occurring at the individual, family, and societal levels.

Urbanization in Global Perspective

Urbanization is defined as the increasing number of people who live in cities or urban areas. The term is also used to refer to an increase in the size and composition of those cities. Population growth and migration are two key factors in urbanization.

Urban sociology is a subfield of sociology that examines social relationships and political and economic structures in the city. According to urban sociologists, a *city* is a relatively dense and permanent settlement of people who secure their livelihood primarily through nonagricultural activities. Although cities have existed for thousands of years, only about 3 percent of the world's population lived in cities two hundred years ago, as compared with more than 50 percent today. Current estimates suggest that 69 percent of the global population will live in urban areas by 2050 (United Nations, 2019b).

Emergence and Evolution of the City

Cities are a relatively recent innovation when compared with the length of human existence. The earliest humans are believed to have emerged anywhere from 40,000 to 1,000,000 years ago, and permanent human settlements are believed to have begun first about 8000 BCE. However, some scholars date the development of the first city between 3500 and 3100 BCE, depending largely on whether a formal writing system is considered as a requisite for city life.

According to sociologist Gideon Sjoberg (1965), three preconditions must be present in order for a city to develop:

1. *A favorable physical environment*, including climate and soil favorable to the development of plant and animal life and an adequate water supply to sustain both.
2. *An advanced technology* (for that era) that could produce a social surplus of both agricultural and nonagricultural goods.
3. *A well-developed social organization*, including a power structure, in order to provide social stability to the economic system.

Based on these prerequisites, Sjoberg places the first cities in the Middle Eastern region of Mesopotamia or in areas immediately adjacent to it at about 3500 BCE. However, not all scholars concur; some place the earliest city in Jericho (located in present-day Jordan) at about 8000 BCE, with a population of about six hundred people (see Kenyon, 1957).

The earliest cities were not large by today's standards. The population of the larger Mesopotamian centers was between 5,000 and 10,000 (Sjoberg, 1965). The population of ancient

Babylon (probably founded around 2200 BCE) may have grown as large as 50,000 people; Athens may have held 80,000 people (Weeks, 2012). Four to five thousand years ago, cities with at least 50,000 people existed in the Middle East (in what today is Iraq and Egypt) and Asia (in what today is Pakistan and China), as well as in Europe. About 3,500 years ago, cities began to reach this size in Central and South America.

Preindustrial Cities

The largest preindustrial city was Rome; by 100 CE, it may have had a population of 650,000. With the fall of the Roman Empire in 476 CE, the nature of European cities changed. Seeking protection and survival, those persons who lived in urban settings typically did so in walled cities containing no more than 25,000 people. For the next six hundred years, the urban population continued to live in walled enclaves, as competing warlords battled for power and territory during the “dark ages.” Slowly, as trade increased, cities began to tear down their walls.

Preindustrial cities were limited in size by a number of factors. For one thing, crowded housing conditions and a lack of adequate sewage facilities increased the hazards from plagues and fires, and death rates were high. For another, food supplies were limited. In order to generate food for each city resident, at least fifty farmers had to work in the fields, and animal power was the only way to bring food to the city. Once foodstuffs arrived in the city, there was no effective way to preserve them. Finally, migration to the city was difficult. Many people were in serf, slave, and caste systems whereby they were bound to the land. Those able to escape such restrictions still faced several weeks of travel to reach the city, thus making it physically and financially impossible for many people to become city-dwellers.

In spite of these problems, many preindustrial cities had a sense of *community*—a set of social relationships operating within given spatial boundaries or locations that provided people with a sense of identity and a feeling of belonging. The cities were full of people from all walks of life, both rich and poor, and they felt a high degree of social integration. You will recall that Ferdinand Tönnies (1940/1887) described such a community as *Gemeinschaft*—a society in which social relationships are based on personal bonds of friendship and kinship and on intergenerational stability, such that people have a commitment to the entire group and feel a sense of togetherness. By contrast, industrial cities were characterized by Tönnies as *Gesellschaft*—societies exhibiting impersonal and specialized relationships, with little long-term commitment to the group or consensus on values. In *Gesellschaft* societies, even neighbors are “strangers” who perceive that they have little in common with one another.

Industrial Cities

The Industrial Revolution changed the nature of the city. Factories sprang up rapidly as production shifted from the primary, agricultural sector to the secondary, manufacturing sector. With the advent of factories came many

new employment opportunities not available to people in rural areas. Emergent technology, including new forms of transportation and agricultural production, made it easier for people to leave the countryside and move to the city. Between 1700 and 1900, the population of many European cities mushroomed. For example, the population of London increased from 550,000 to almost 6.5 million. Although the Industrial Revolution did not start in the United States until the mid-nineteenth century, the effect was similar. Between 1870 and 1910, for example, the population of New York City grew by 500 percent. In fact, New York City became the first U.S. *metropolis*—one or more central cities and their surrounding suburbs that dominate the economic and cultural life of a region. Nations such as Japan and Russia, which became industrialized after England and the United States, experienced a delayed pattern of urbanization, but this process moved quickly once it began in those countries.

Postindustrial Cities

Since the 1950s, postindustrial cities have emerged in nations such as the United States as their economies have gradually shifted from secondary (manufacturing) production to tertiary (service and information-processing) production. Postindustrial cities increasingly rely on an economic structure that is based on scientific knowledge rather than industrial production, and, as a result, a class of professionals and technicians grows in size and influence. Postindustrial cities are dominated by “light” industry, such as software manufacturing; information-processing services, such as airline and hotel reservation services; educational complexes; medical centers; convention and entertainment centers; and retail trade centers and shopping malls. Most families do not live close to a central business district (■ Figure 15.8). Technological advances in communication

and transportation make it possible for middle- and upper-income individuals and families to have more work options and to live greater distances from the workplace; however, these options are not often available to people of color and those at the lower end of the class structure.

On a global basis, cities such as New York, London, and Tokyo appear to fit the model of the postindustrial city. These cities have experienced a rapid growth in knowledge-based industries such as financial services. London, Tokyo, and New York have—at least until recently—experienced an increase in the number of highly paid professional jobs, and more workers have been in high-income categories. Many people have benefited for a number of years from these high incomes and have created a lifestyle that is based on materialism and the gentrification of urban spaces. Meanwhile, those persons outside the growing professional categories have seen their own quality of life further deteriorate and their job opportunities become increasingly restricted to secondary labor markets in their respective “global” cities.

What is next for the postindustrial city? Various social analysts have proposed that cities are far from dead because of the many benefits they offer people. According to urban economist Edward Glaeser (2011), the future of nations and the world relies on cities that bring people together in a setting that is “healthier, greener, and richer” than urban myths would have us believe. From this perspective, incomes are higher in metropolitan areas, and cities are more energy efficient than suburban areas, where people commute great distances, often in heavy traffic congestion with stop-and-go traffic, between work and home. Cities are also centers of consumption; however, this benefit primarily accrues to the wealthy. However, the poor fare better than many think because they have inexpensive mass transit, the ability to “cram into small apartments in the outer boroughs,” and “plenty of entry-level service-sector jobs with wages that beat those in Ghana or Guatemala” (Glaeser, 2011). People in the middle-income category often have a harder time because of the costs of housing in good neighborhoods and a quality education for their children (Glaeser, 2011).

A second perspective on the postmodern city has been offered by John D. Kasarda, who coined the term *aerotropolis* to describe a new urban pattern in which cities are built around airports rather than airports being built around cities. An aerotropolis is a combination of giant airport, planned city, shipping facility, and business hub. According to this approach, the pattern of the twentieth century was city in the center, airport on the periphery. However, this pattern has shifted, with the airport now in the center and the city on the periphery, because of extensive growth in jet travel, 24/7 workdays, overnight shipping, and global business networks (Kasarda and Lindsay, 2011).



FIGURE 15.8 Since the 1950s, postindustrial cities have emerged in which families do not live close to a central business district and more homes are located in suburban or outlying residential enclaves such as the neighborhood shown here.

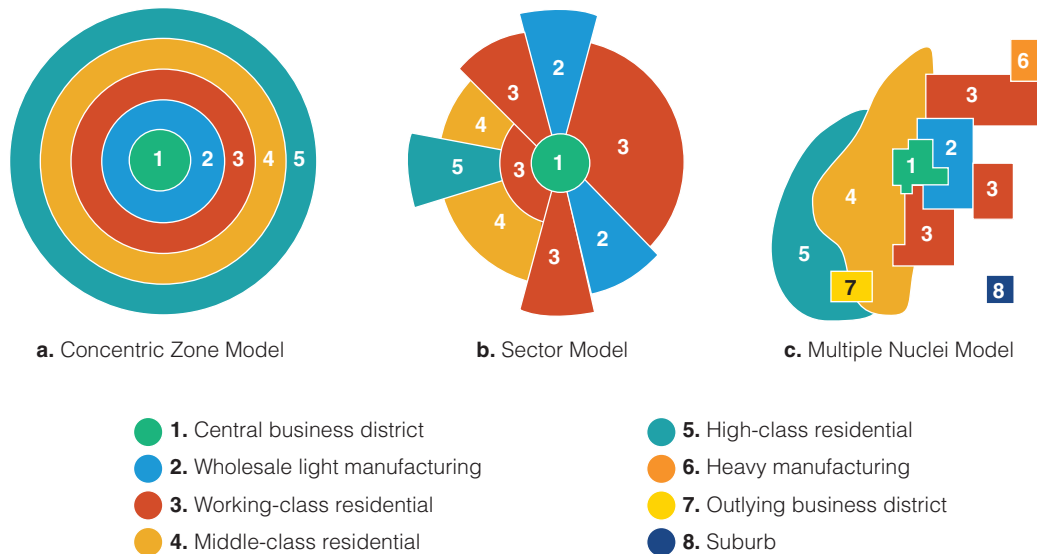


FIGURE 15.9 Three Models of the City

Source: Adapted from Harris and Ullman, 1945.

Aerotropoli are now found in Seoul, Amsterdam, Dallas, Memphis, Washington, D.C., and other cities where globalization has forever changed the nature of urban life.

Perspectives on Urbanization and the Growth of Cities

Urban sociology follows in the tradition of early European sociological perspectives that compared social life with biological organisms or ecological processes. For example, Auguste Comte pointed out that cities are the “real organs” that make a society function. Emile Durkheim applied natural ecology to his analysis of *mechanical solidarity*, characterized by a simple division of labor and shared religious beliefs such as are found in small, agrarian societies, and *organic solidarity*, characterized by interdependence based on the elaborate division of labor found in large, urban societies. These early analyses became the foundation for ecological models/functionalist perspectives in urban sociology.

Functionalist Perspectives: Ecological Models

Functionalists examine the interrelations among the parts that make up the whole; therefore, in studying the growth of cities, they emphasize the life cycle of urban growth. Like the social philosophers and sociologists before him, University of Chicago sociologist Robert Park (1915) based his analysis of the city on *human ecology*—the study of the relationship between people and their physical environment. According to Park (1936), economic competition produces certain regularities in land-use patterns and

population distributions. Applying Park’s idea to the study of urban land-use patterns, sociologist Ernest W. Burgess (1925) developed the concentric zone model, an ideal construct that attempts to explain why some cities expand radially from a central business core.

The Concentric Zone Model Burgess’s *concentric zone model* is a description of the process of urban growth that views the city as a series of circular areas or zones, each characterized by a different type of land use, which developed from a central core (see ■ Figure 15.9a). *Zone 1* is the central business district and cultural center. In *Zone 2*, houses formerly occupied by wealthy families are divided into rooms and rented to recent immigrants and poor persons; this zone also contains light manufacturing and marginal businesses (such as secondhand stores, pawnshops, and taverns). *Zone 3* contains working-class residences and shops and ethnic enclaves. *Zone 4* comprises homes for affluent families, single-family residences of white-collar workers, and shopping centers. *Zone 5* is a ring of small cities and towns populated by persons who commute to the central city to work and by wealthy people living on estates.

Two important ecological processes are involved in the concentric zone theory: invasion and succession. **Invasion** is the process by which a new category of people or type of land use arrives in an area previously occupied by another group or type of land use (McKenzie, 1925). For example, Burgess noted that recent immigrants and low-income individuals “invaded” Zone 2, formerly occupied by wealthy

invasion

the process by which a new category of people or type of land use arrives in an area previously occupied by another group or type of land use.

families. **Succession** is the process by which a new category of people or type of land use gradually predominates in an area formerly dominated by another group or type of land use (McKenzie, 1925). In Zone 2, for example, when some of the single-family residences were sold and subsequently divided into multiple housing units, the remaining single-family owners moved out because the “old” neighborhood had changed. As a result of their move, the process of invasion was complete, and succession had occurred.

Invasion and succession theoretically operate in an outward movement: Those who are unable to “move out” of the inner rings are those without upward social mobility, so the central zone ends up being primarily occupied by the poorest residents—except when gentrification occurs. **Gentrification** is the process by which members of the middle and upper-middle classes, especially whites, move into a central-city area and renovate existing properties (■ Figure 15.10). Centrally located, naturally attractive areas are the most likely candidates for gentrification. To urban ecologists, gentrification is the solution to revitalizing the central city. To conflict theorists, however, gentrification creates additional hardships for the poor by depleting the amount of affordable housing available and by “pushing” them out of the area.

The concentric zone model demonstrates how economic and political forces play an important part in the location of groups and activities, and it shows how a large urban area can have internal differentiation. However, the model is most applicable to older cities that experienced high levels of immigration early in the twentieth century and to a few midwestern cities such as St. Louis. No city, including Chicago (on which the model is based), conforms to this model entirely.

The Sector Model In an attempt to examine a wider range of settings, urban ecologist Homer Hoyt (1939) studied the configuration of 142 cities. Hoyt’s *sector model* emphasizes the significance of terrain and the importance of transportation routes in the layout of cities. According to Hoyt, residences of a particular type and value tend to grow outward from the center of the city in wedge-shaped sectors, with the more expensive residential neighborhoods located along the higher ground near lakes and rivers or along certain streets that stretch in one direction or another from the downtown area (see ■ Figure 15.9b). By contrast, industrial areas tend to be located along river valleys and railroad lines. Middle-class residential zones exist on either side of the wealthier neighborhoods. Finally, lower-class residential areas occupy the remaining space, bordering the central business area and the industrial areas. Hoyt concluded that the sector model applied to cities such as Seattle, Minneapolis, San Francisco, Charleston (South Carolina), and Richmond (Virginia).

The Multiple Nuclei Model According to the *multiple nuclei model* developed by urban ecologists Chauncey Harris and Edward Ullman (1945), cities do not have one center from which all growth radiates but rather have numerous centers of development based on specific urban needs or activities (see ■ Figure 15.9c). As cities began to grow rapidly, they annexed formerly outlying and independent townships that had been communities in their own right. In addition to the central business district, other nuclei developed around entities such as an educational institution, a medical complex, or a government center. Residential neighborhoods may exist close to or far away from these nuclei. A wealthy residential enclave may be located near a high-priced shopping center, for instance, whereas less-expensive housing must locate closer to industrial and transitional areas of town. This model may be applicable to cities such as Boston. However, critics suggest that it does not provide insights about the uniformity of land-use patterns among cities and relies on an after-the-fact explanation of why certain entities are located where they are.

Contemporary Urban Ecology Urban ecologist Amos Hawley (1950) revitalized the ecological tradition by linking it more closely with functionalism. According to Hawley, urban areas are complex and expanding social systems in which growth patterns are based on advances in transportation and communication. For example, commuter railways and automobiles led to the decentralization of city life and the movement of industry from the central city to the suburbs (Hawley, 1981).



Richard B. Levine/Levine Roberts Photography/New York/NY/USA/Newscom

FIGURE 15.10 These Brooklyn, New York, residences are in various stages of renovation as the Crown Heights area in which they are located continues to undergo gentrification. Do you believe that gentrification is the solution to revitalizing cities? Which categories of people are most likely to benefit from this process? Which are most likely to be disadvantaged as change occurs?

Other urban ecologists have continued to refine the methodology used to study the urban environment. *Social area analysis* examines urban populations in terms of economic status, family status, and ethnic classification (Shevky and Bell, 1966). For example, middle- and upper-middle-class parents with school-age children tend to cluster together in “social areas” with a “good” school district, but young single professionals may prefer to cluster in the central city for entertainment and nightlife.

The influence of human ecology on the field of urban sociology is still very strong today (see Frisbie and Kasarda, 1988). Contemporary research on European and North American urban patterns is often based on the assumption that spatial arrangements in cities conform to a common, most efficient design. However, some critics have noted that ecological models do not take into account the influence of powerful political and economic elites on the development process in urban areas (Feagin and Parker, 2002).

Conflict Perspectives: Political Economy Models

Conflict theorists argue that cities do not grow or decline by chance. Rather, they are the product of specific decisions made by members of the capitalist class and political elites. These far-reaching decisions regarding land use and urban development benefit the members of some groups at the expense of others (see Castells, 1977/1972). Karl Marx suggested that cities are the arenas in which the intertwined processes of class conflict and capital accumulation take place; class consciousness and worker revolt are more likely to develop when workers are concentrated in urban areas.

According to sociologists Joe R. Feagin and Robert Parker (2002), three major themes prevail in political economy models of urban growth. First, both economic and political factors affect patterns of urban growth and decline. Economic factors include capitalistic investments in production, workers, workplaces, land, and buildings. Political factors include governmental protection of the right to own and dispose of privately held property as owners see fit and the role of government officials in promoting the interests of business elites and large corporations.

Second, urban space has both an exchange value and a use value. *Exchange value* refers to the profits that industrialists, developers, bankers, and others make from buying, selling, and developing land and buildings. By contrast, *use value* is the utility of space, land, and buildings for everyday life, family life, and neighborhood life. In other words, land has purposes other than simply for generating profits—for example, for homes, open spaces, and recreational areas (see ■ Figure 15.11). Today, class conflict exists over the use

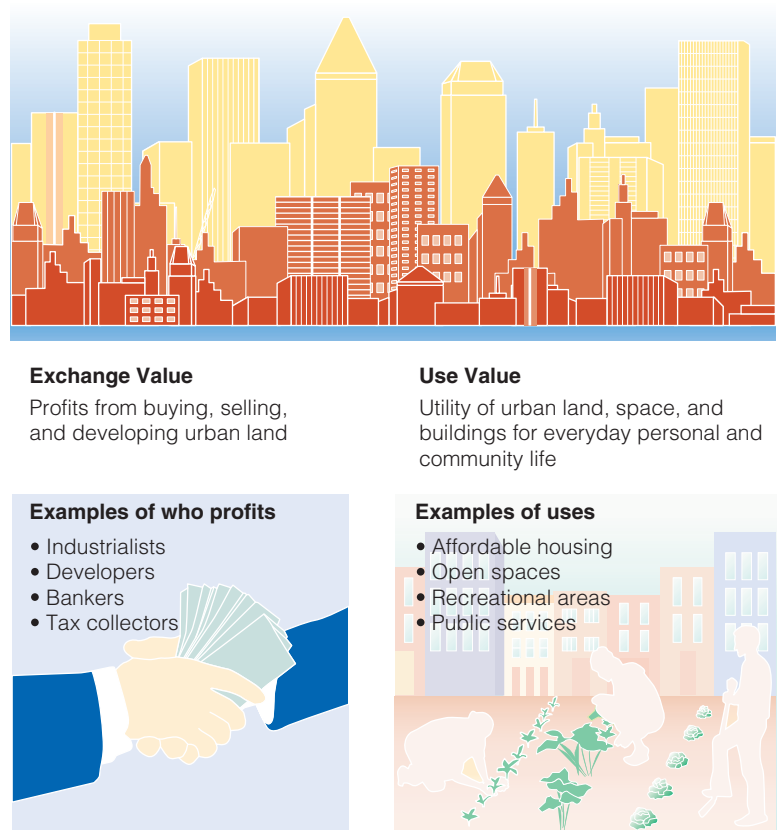


FIGURE 15.11 The Value of Urban Space

of urban space, as is evident in battles over the rental costs, safety, and development of large-scale projects.

Third, both structure and agency are important in understanding how urban development takes place. *Structure* refers to institutions such as state bureaucracies and capital investment circuits that are involved in the urban development process. *Agency* refers to human actors, including developers, business elites, and activists protesting development, who are involved in decisions about land use.

Capitalism and Urban Growth in the United States

According to political economy models, urban growth is influenced by capital investment decisions, power and resource inequality, class and class conflict, and government subsidy programs. Members of the capitalist class choose corporate locations, decide on sites for shopping centers and factories, and spread the population that can afford

succession

the process by which a new category of people or type of land use gradually predominates in an area formerly dominated by another group or type of land use.

gentrification

the process by which members of the middle and upper-middle classes, especially whites, move into a central-city area and renovate existing properties.

to purchase homes into sprawling suburbs located exactly where the capitalists think they should be located (Feagin and Parker, 2002).

Today, a few hundred financial institutions and developers finance and construct most major and many smaller urban development projects around the country, including skyscrapers, shopping malls, and suburban housing projects. These decision makers set limits on the individual choices of the ordinary citizen with regard to real estate, just as they do with regard to other choices (Feagin and Parker, 2002). They can make housing more affordable or totally unaffordable for many people. Ultimately, their motivation rests not in benefiting the community but rather in making a profit; the cities that they produce reflect this mindset.

One of the major results of these urban development practices is *uneven development*—the tendency of some neighborhoods, cities, or regions to grow and prosper whereas others stagnate and decline. Conflict theorists argue that uneven development reflects inequalities of wealth and power in society. The problem not only affects areas in a state of decline but also produces external costs, even in “boom” areas, that are paid by the entire community. Among these costs are increased pollution, increased traffic congestion, and rising rates of crime and violence. According to sociologist Mark Gottdiener (1985: 214), these costs are “intrinsic to the very core of capitalism, and those who profit the most from development are not called upon to remedy its side effects.”

The Gated Community in the Capitalist Economy The growth of *gated communities*—subdivisions or neighborhoods surrounded by barriers such as walls, fences, gates, or earth banks covered with bushes and shrubs, along with a secured entrance—is an example to many people of how developers, builders, and municipalities have encouraged an increasing division between public and private property in capitalist societies (■ Figure 15.12).



Ilene MacDonald/Alamy Stock Photo

FIGURE 15.12 How do gated communities increase the division between public and private property in the United States?

Many gated communities are created by developers who hope to increase their profits by offering potential residents a semblance of safety, privacy, and luxury that they might not have in nongated residential areas. Other gated communities have been developed after the fact in established neighborhoods by adding walls, gates, and sometimes security guard stations. In the past, for example, residents of elite residential enclaves, such as the River Oaks area of Houston or the “Old Enfield” area of Austin, Texas, were able to gain approval from the city to close certain streets and create cul-de-sacs or to erect other barriers to discourage or prevent outsiders from driving through the neighborhood (Kendall, 2002). Gated communities for upper-middle-class and upper-class residents convey the idea of exclusivity and privilege, whereas such communities for middle- and lower-income residents typically focus on such features as safety for children and the ability to share amenities such as a “community” swimming pool or recreational center with other residents.

Regardless of the social and economic reasons given for the development of gated communities, many analysts agree that these communities reflect a growing divide between public and private space in urban areas. According to a qualitative study by anthropologist Setha Low (2003), gated communities do more than simply restrict access to the residents’ homes: They also limit the use of public spaces, making it impossible for others to use the roads, parks, and open space contained within the enclosed community. Low refers to this phenomenon as the “fortressing of America.”

Gender Regimes in Cities Some feminist perspectives focus on urbanization as a reflection not only of the workings of the political economy but also of patriarchy. According to sociologist Lynn M. Appleton (1995), different kinds of cities have different *gender regimes*—prevailing ideologies of how women and men should think, feel, and act; how access to social positions and control of resources should be managed; and how relationships between men and women should be conducted. The higher density and greater diversity found in central cities such as New York City serve as a challenge to the private patriarchy found in the home and workplace in lower-density, homogeneous areas such as suburbs and rural areas. *Private patriarchy* is based on a strongly gendered division of labor in the home, gender-segregated paid employment, and women’s dependence on men’s income.

At the same time, cities may foster *public patriarchy* in the form of women’s increasing dependence on paid work and the government for income and their decreasing emotional interdependence with men. At this point, gender often intersects with class and race as a form of oppression because lower-income women of color often reside in central cities. Public patriarchy may be perpetuated by cities through policies that limit women’s access to paid work and public transportation.

However, such cities may also be a forum for challenging patriarchy; all residents who differ in marital status, paternity, sexual orientation, class, and/or race/ethnicity tend to live close to one another and may hold a common belief that both public and private patriarchy should be eliminated (Appleton, 1995).

Symbolic Interactionist Perspectives: The Experience of City Life

Symbolic interactionists examine the *experience* of urban life. How does city life affect the people who live in a city? Some analysts answer this question positively; others are cynical about the effects of urban living on the individual.

Simmel's View of City Life According to German sociologist Georg Simmel (1858/1902–1917), urban life is highly stimulating, and it shapes people's thoughts and actions. Urban residents are influenced by the quick pace of the city and the pervasiveness of economic relations in everyday life. Because of the intensity of urban life, people have no choice but to become somewhat insensitive to events and individuals around them. Many urban residents avoid emotional involvement with one another and try to ignore events taking place around them. Urbanites feel wary toward other people because most interactions in the city are economic rather than social. Simmel suggests that attributes such as punctuality and exactness are rewarded but that friendliness and warmth in interpersonal relations are viewed as personal weaknesses. Some people act reserved to cloak their deeper feelings of distrust or dislike toward others. However, Simmel did not view city life as completely negative; he also pointed out that urban living could have a liberating effect on people because they have opportunities for individualism and autonomy.

Urbanism as a Way of Life Based on Simmel's observations on social relations in the city, early Chicago School sociologist Louis Wirth (1938) suggested that urbanism is a "way of life." *Urbanism* refers to the distinctive social and

psychological patterns of life typically found in the city. According to Wirth, the size, density, and heterogeneity of urban populations typically result in an elaborate division of labor and in spatial segregation of people by race/ethnicity, social class, religion, and/or lifestyle. In the city, primary-group ties are largely replaced by secondary relationships; social interaction is fragmented, impersonal, and often superficial. Even though people gain some degree of freedom and privacy by living in the city, they pay a price for their autonomy, losing the support and reassurance that come from primary-group ties.

From Wirth's perspective, people who live in urban areas are alienated, powerless, and lonely. A sense of community is obliterated and replaced by the "mass society"—a large-scale, highly institutionalized society in which individuality is supplanted by mass messages, faceless bureaucrats, and corporate interests.

Gans's Urban Villagers In contrast to Wirth's gloomy assessment of urban life, sociologist Herbert Gans (1982/1962) suggested that not everyone experiences the city in the same way (■ Figure 15.13). Based on research in

the west end of Boston in the late 1950s, Gans concluded that many residents develop strong loyalties and a sense of community in central-city areas that outsiders may view negatively. According to Gans, there are five major categories of adaptation among urban-dwellers. *Cosmopolites* are students, artists, writers, musicians, entertainers, and professionals who choose to live in the city because they want to be close to its cultural facilities. *Unmarried people* and *childless couples* live in the city because they want to be close to work and entertainment. *Ethnic villagers* live in ethnically segregated neighborhoods; some are recent immigrants who feel most comfortable within their own group. The *deprived* are poor individuals with dim future prospects; they have very limited education and few, if any, other resources. The *trapped* are urban-dwellers who can find no escape from the city; this group includes persons left behind by the process of invasion and succession,



FIGURE 15.13 The people shown here enjoying a walk down East 6th Street, also known as Old Pecan Street, in Austin, Texas, may consider themselves to be "urban villagers" because they can enjoy small-town amenities such as little shops, neighborhood-like restaurants, and live music venues while living in a larger city. Do you consider yourself to be an urban villager?

downwardly mobile individuals who have lost their former position in society, older persons who have nowhere else to go, and individuals addicted to alcohol or other drugs. Gans concluded that the city is a pleasure and a challenge for some urban dwellers and a nightmare for others.

Cities and Persons with a Disability Cities often provide unique barriers for persons with a disability without intending to do so. Disability rights advocates believe that structural barriers create a “disabling” environment for many people, particularly in large urban settings. Many cities have made their streets and sidewalks more user-friendly for persons in wheelchairs and for individuals with visual disability by constructing concrete ramps with slide-proof surfaces at intersections or installing traffic lights with sounds designating when to “Walk.” However, both urban and rural areas have a long way to go before many persons with disabilities will have the access to the things they need to become productive members of the community: educational and employment opportunities. Some persons with disabilities cannot navigate the streets and sidewalks of their communities, and some face obstacles getting into buildings that marginally, at best, meet the accessibility standards of the Americans with Disabilities Act; thus, many persons with a disability are unemployed.

Political scientist Harlan Hahn (1997: 177–178) traces the problem of lack of access to the beginnings of industrialism:

The rise of industrialism produced extensive changes in the lives of disabled as well as nondisabled people. As factories replaced private dwellings as the primary sites of production, routines and architectural configurations were standardized to suit nondisabled workers. Both the design of worksites and of the products that were manufactured gave virtually no attention to the needs of people with disabilities. As a result, patterns of aversion and avoidance toward disabled persons were embedded in the construction of commodities, landscapes, and buildings that would remain for centuries....

The social and economic changes fostered by industrialization may have been exacerbated by the accompanying process of urbanization. As workers increasingly moved from farms and rural villages to live near the institutions of mass production, the character of community life appeared to shift perceptibly. Deviant or atypical personal characteristics that may have gradually become familiar in a small community seemed bizarre or disturbing in an urban milieu.

As Hahn’s statement suggests, historical patterns in the dynamics of industrial capitalism contributed to discrimination against persons with disabilities, and this legacy remains evident in contemporary cities. Structural barriers are further intensified when other people do not respond

favorably toward persons with disabilities. In the twenty-first century, based on the Americans with Disability Act and a better understanding of the unique structural needs of some persons with a disability, public and private organizations have intensified their efforts to make spaces readily available and user-friendly for individuals with unique needs. However, much remains to be done, particularly due to the fact that many older structures are difficult to retrofit in such a manner that meets the needs of persons with a disability.

The Concept Quick Review examines the multiple perspectives on urban growth and urban living.

Problems in Global Cities

Although people have lived in cities for thousands of years, the time is rapidly approaching when more people worldwide will live in or near a city than live in a rural area. In the middle-income and low-income regions of the world, Latin America is becoming the most urbanized: Four megacities—Mexico City, Buenos Aires, Lima, and Santiago—already contain more than half of the region’s population and continue to grow rapidly. Soon, Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo are expected to have a combined population of about 35 million people living in a 350-mile-long megalopolis.

Rapid population growth will have a major effect on cities throughout the world. Essential services such as health, education, transportation, and sanitation are already strained in many cities, and the problem will only grow worse as the world’s population moves upward toward a projected 10 billion or more by the end of the twenty-first century. In China alone it is estimated that 220 cities will have more than one million people by 2025 and that more than 350 million rural residents will move to the cities from rural areas. Requirements for new and expanded infrastructure in these cities will be tremendous, particularly in the development of high-rise buildings, mass-transit systems, and other amenities that will be needed to support this colossal population shift.

Today, some social analysts look beyond the city proper, which is defined as a locality with legally fixed boundaries and an administratively recognized urban status that is usually characterized by some form of local government, to see the larger picture of what takes place in urban agglomerations. An *urban agglomeration* is defined as comprising the city or town proper and also the suburban fringe or thickly settled territory lying outside of, but adjacent to, the city boundaries. This approach can provide a more accurate reflection of population composition and density in a given region. ■ Figure 15.14 shows the populations of the world’s fifteen largest urban agglomerations, ranging from Tokyo to Istanbul.

Natural increases in population (higher birthrates than death rates) account for two-thirds of new urban growth. In recent years, fewer deaths and more births have occurred than demographers had anticipated.

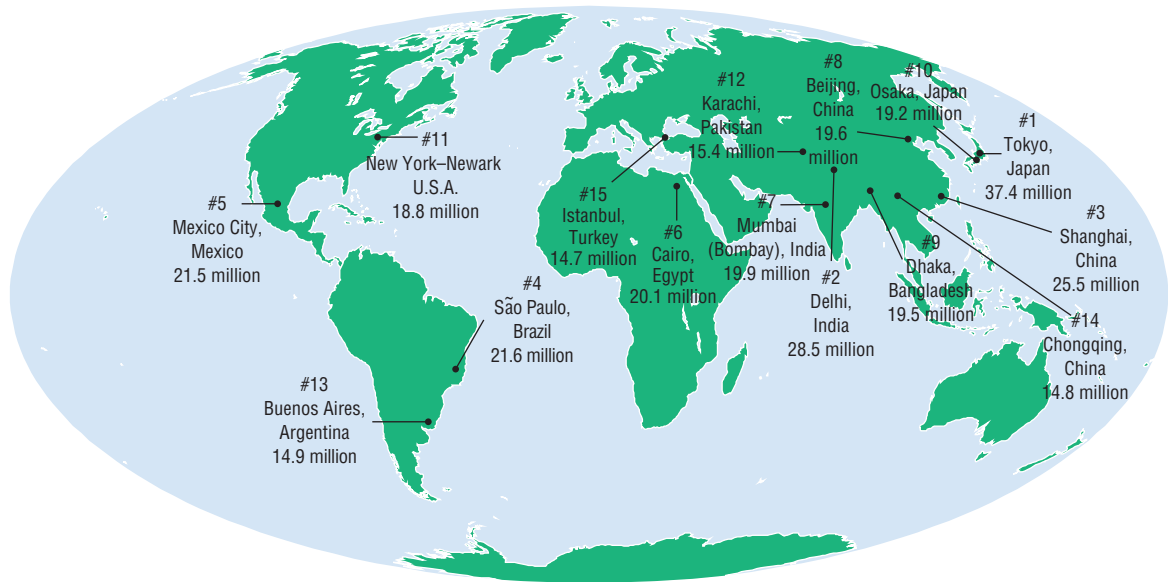


FIGURE 15.14 The World's Fifteen Largest Agglomerations

Note: Estimation of the 2018 population in millions.

Source: United Nations, 2019c.

High fertility brings about booming populations and a corresponding strain on food and other resources; however, low fertility contributes to an aging population and stress on social services.

The other component of new urban growth is rural-to-urban migration. Some people move from rural areas to urban areas because they have been displaced from their land. Others move because they are looking for a better life. No matter what the reason, migration has caused rapid growth in cities in China, sub-Saharan Africa, India, Algeria, and Egypt. At the same time that the population is growing rapidly, the amount of farmland available for growing crops to feed people is decreasing. In Egypt, for example, land that was previously used for growing crops is now used for petroleum refineries, food-processing plants, and other factories. Issues such as this contributed to a political uprising in 2011 and continued unrest in the following years.

Rapid global population growth in Latin America and other regions is producing a variety of urban problems, including overcrowding, environmental pollution, and the disappearance of farmland. In fact, many cities in middle- and low-income nations are quickly reaching the point at which food, housing, and basic public services are available to only a limited segment of the population.

As global urbanization has continued to increase, differences in urban areas based on economic development at the national level have become apparent. Some cities in what Immanuel Wallerstein's (1984) world systems theory describes as core nations are referred to as *global cities*—interconnected urban areas that are centers of political, economic, and cultural activity. New York City, London, Paris, Tokyo, Hong Kong, Los Angeles, Seoul, and Singapore are among the largest global cities today. These cities

are the sites of new and innovative product development and marketing, and they are often the “command posts” for the world economy. But economic prosperity is not shared equally by all of the people in the core-nation global cities. Sometimes the living conditions of workers in low-wage service-sector jobs or in assembly production jobs more closely resemble the living conditions of workers in semi-peripheral nations than they resemble the conditions of middle-class workers in their own country.

Many African countries and some countries in South America and the Caribbean are *peripheral* nations, previously defined as nations that depend on core nations for capital, have little or no industrialization (other than what may be brought in by core nations), and have uneven patterns of urbanization. According to Wallerstein (1984), the wealthy in peripheral nations support the exploitation of poor workers by core-nation capitalists in return for maintaining their own wealth and position. Poverty is thus perpetuated, and the problems worsen because of the unprecedented population growth in these countries. Like peripheral nations, semiperipheral nations—such as India, Iran, and Mexico—are confronted with unprecedented population growth. In addition, a steady flow of rural migrants to large cities is creating enormous urban problems.

More recently, Wallerstein suggested that a new world system is emerging that will retain some basic features of the existing one, but it will not be based on capitalism as we know it. According to Wallerstein, the new system will be either hierarchical and exploitative or relatively democratic and relatively egalitarian. In either scenario, national and local governments will be faced with difficult choices, including how to deal with major fiscal crises and immigration. In the United States and throughout Europe, for

CONCEPT Quick Review

Perspectives on Urbanism and the Growth of Cities

Functionalist Perspectives: Ecological Models	Concentric zone model	Because of invasion, succession, and gentrification, cities are a series of circular zones, each characterized by a particular land use.
	Sector model	Cities consist of wedge-shaped sectors, based on terrain and transportation routes, with the most expensive areas occupying the best terrain.
	Multiple nuclei model	Cities have more than one center of development, based on specific needs and activities.
Conflict Perspectives: Political Economy Models	Capitalism and urban growth	Members of the capitalist class choose locations for skyscrapers and housing projects, limiting individual choices by others.
	Gender regimes in cities	Different cities have different prevailing ideologies regarding access to social positions and resources for men and women.
	Gated communities in the capitalist economy	A belief in private ownership of property under capitalism promotes real-estate developments such as gated communities that contribute to a growing divide between public and private space in urban areas.
Symbolic Interactionist Perspectives: The Experience of City Life	Simmel's view of city life	Because of the intensity of city life, people become somewhat insensitive to individuals and events around them.
	Urbanism as a way of life	The size, density, and heterogeneity of urban population result in an elaborate division of labor and space.
	Gans's urban villagers	Five categories of adaptation occur among urban-dwellers, ranging from cosmopolites to trapped city-dwellers.
	Disability and city life	Cities provide unique challenges for persons with disabilities because urban areas often have barriers that make equal access difficult, despite rights that were gained under the Americans with Disabilities Act.

example, a growing cry demands that governments “do something” about evicting “foreigners”; however, the effects of such an action may create great turmoil and economic instability in cities. Wallerstein’s original theory that work migrates from core nations to workers in semiperipheral and peripheral nations has shifted: Workers are now migrating to cities where they hope to find employment to support themselves and their families, and this process is not likely to stop in the near future.

Urban Problems in the United States

Even the most optimistic observers tend to agree that cities in the United States have problems brought on by years of neglect and deterioration. As we have seen in previous chapters, poverty, crime, racism, sexism, homelessness, inadequate public school systems, alcoholism and other drug abuse, gangs and guns, and other social problems are most visible and acute in urban settings. Issues of urban growth and development are intertwined with many of these problems (■ Figure 15.15).

Divided Interests: Cities and Suburbs

In the twenty-first century the composition of the U.S. population in major cities is changing rapidly. The white population is aging and declining in a number of cities, while the minority population is continuing to grow and disperse. According to the 2010 census, Hispanics (Latinx) represent the largest minority group in major U.S. cities. The Hispanic share of urban population rose in all of the largest one hundred metropolitan areas to the extent that Hispanics now outnumber African Americans (blacks) as the largest minority group in major U.S. cities. The data show that Hispanics make up 26 percent of primary city (as compared to suburban) populations, while blacks make up 22 percent of city populations. Across all cities in 2010, white Americans account for 41 percent of residents in primary cities—continuing a downward trend from 53 percent in 1990 to 45 percent in 2000 and then reaching the current 41 percent (Frey, 2018).

The story of divided interests between cities and suburbs has continued for more than a century. Following World War II, a dramatic population shift occurred as

thousands of families moved from cities to suburbs. Postwar suburban growth was fueled by aggressive land developers, inexpensive real estate and construction methods, better transportation, abundant energy, government subsidies made available through the liberal lending policies of federal agencies such as the Veterans Administration and the Federal Housing Authority, and racial stress in the cities. This pattern of postwar suburbanization and decades of white flight from cities produced a pattern in which the majority of today's white Americans who live in large urban areas are in the suburbs. By 2010, 78 percent of all white Americans who resided in large metro areas lived in suburbs, up from 74 percent in 1990 (Frey, 2018).

Suburbanization created a territorial division of interests between cities and suburban areas. City services and school districts have continued to languish for lack of funds. Affluent families living in “gentrified” properties in the city typically send their children to elite private schools, whereas the children of poor families living in racially segregated public housing projects attend underfunded (and often substandard) public schools. For decades the wealthy and the poor have lived in different spheres, even when they reside in close proximity in urban areas.

Race, Class, and Suburbs Sharp racial and ethnic divisions between cities and suburbs have become more blurred in the 2010s; however, class lines remain more distinct, particularly in some wealthy suburban areas. In the past, most suburbs were predominantly white and middle class. According to the 2010 census, minorities represent 35 percent of suburban residents in the one hundred largest metropolitan areas in the United States, similar to their share of the overall population. Hispanics make up 17 percent of suburbanites (as compared to 16 percent of the overall population); blacks make up 10 percent of suburbanites (as compared to 12 percent of the overall population) (Frey, 2018).



FIGURE 15.15 Despite an increase in telecommuting and more-diverse employment opportunities in the high-tech economy, our highways have grown increasingly congested. Can we implement measures to reduce the problems of urban congestion and environmental pollution, such as the ones shown here in Seattle, Washington, rush-hour traffic, or will these problems grow worse with each passing year?

What most data do not reveal is how class and other demographic factors are intertwined with suburban integration. In some suburbs, people of color (especially African Americans) become resegregated (■ Figure 15.16). An example is the Detroit metropolitan area, where Census Bureau data show a 25 percent drop in the city's population over the



FIGURE 15.16 Class and other demographic factors are intertwined with suburban integration. Some suburbs, such as this one near Detroit, have become racially resegregated and provide few job opportunities and public services for residents who live there.

last decade and a corresponding increase in minority population in the suburbs. According to a study by historian and sociologist Thomas J. Sugrue (2011), many African Americans are moving into so-called secondhand suburbs in that city and others. Sugrue defines *secondhand suburbs* as “established communities with deteriorating housing stock that are falling out of favor with younger white homebuyers.”

Although some analysts claim that the location of one’s residence is a matter of personal choice, African Americans and other persons of color have sought the same things in suburban properties that white Americans have desired, namely, safe streets and low crime rates, the best housing they can afford, quality schools for their children, and the amenities of life outside the hubbub of the center city. However, what African Americans have often found in areas such as Detroit are fewer job opportunities, poorer services, older houses, and rundown shopping districts (Sugrue, 2011). Fortunately, the overall picture is more positive in some suburbs located near Atlanta, Houston, Dallas, and Washington, where a sharp rise in black suburbanization has occurred as a result of economic progress among younger, college-educated blacks (Frey, 2018).

However, Hispanics account for almost half (49 percent) of the overall growth in population in suburban areas in the 2000s. In the one hundred largest metropolitan areas, Hispanics contributed more to the growth than any other racial and ethnic group in forty-nine of those areas. Hispanics had the largest gains in areas surrounding cities such as New York City, Houston, Miami, Los Angeles, and Riverside, California.

Beyond the Suburbs: Edge Cities and Exurban Areas

In the past, urban fringes (referred to as *edge cities*) developed beyond central cities and suburbs (Garreau, 1991). The Massachusetts Turnpike corridor west of Boston and the Perimeter area north of Atlanta are examples. Edge cities initially develop as residential areas; then retail establishments and office parks move into the area, creating the unincorporated edge city. Commuters from the edge city are able to travel around (rather than in and out of) the metropolitan region’s center and can avoid its rush-hour traffic quagmires. Edge cities may not have a governing body or correspond to municipal boundaries; however, they drain taxes from central cities and older suburbs. Many businesses and industries have moved physical plants and tax dollars to these areas: Land is cheaper, and utility rates and property taxes are lower.

Eventually, edge cities in some states have become commuter towns or exurban areas with more structure. Fast-growing exurban areas in Kentucky, Georgia, Virginia, Missouri, Tennessee, Texas, North Carolina, Alabama, Oklahoma, and Pennsylvania have remained mostly white and have depended overwhelmingly on whites for growth in the twenty-first century (Frey, 2018). Of the twenty-two exurban areas, sixteen are more than 75 percent white, with white Americans accounting for at least 80 percent of the population in fifteen of the twenty areas. Examples include

Spencer, Kentucky, in the Louisville/Jefferson County Kentucky–Indiana metro area; Dawsonville, Georgia, in the Atlanta metro area; New Kent, Virginia, in the Richmond metro area; and the Lincoln County, Missouri, metro area (Frey, 2018). According to a recent study, these exurban areas are a current reflection of what suburbia was in the past, with newer housing and less attachment to the central city. And, to some extent, this includes the continuing financial woes of the cities and suburbs.

The Continuing Fiscal Crises of the Cities

The largest cities in the United States have faced periodic fiscal crises for many years. In 2019, sixty-three out of the most populous seventy-five cities in the United States did not have enough money to pay all their bills, according to financial experts (Valladares, 2019). Part of the fiscal problem of these cities is that officials over the decades have not taken into consideration in their budget calculations how much it really costs to run their local government. If taxpayers have not contributed an adequate amount to build up the funds the cities will need, it falls to future taxpayers or other measures to meet the ongoing financial demands of the cities. According to *Forbes* magazine, the seventy-five most populous cities in the United States have a total unfunded debt of approximately \$330 billion. Much of this comes from unfunded retiree benefit promises to provide such things as health care and pensions (Valladares, 2019). As of 2020, the cities with the worst fiscal problems of this kind were New York City, Chicago, Philadelphia, Honolulu, and San Francisco.

With other cities, one of the major fiscal problems is how to keep debt and poverty levels in check in their community. Cities at greatest risk have high poverty rates, low incomes, and extensive debt (Mayer, 2019). Although it is impossible to cite just one major cause of financial problems in cities, several factors seem to influence the fiscal health of cities. Cities with poverty levels above the national average were in more danger financially. Cities with low and stagnant wages were another source of concern because high rates of unemployment and low wages meant that citizens were unable to provide less revenue to the city for sales tax, property tax, and other things that contributed to the city’s financial well-being. Cities have had a high cost of living for such things as housing, transportation, food, and other goods and services combined with the presence of many people who earned low wages or were unemployed added to the city’s public service costs. Some analysts attribute many of the fiscal problems of the cities to educational gaps of citizens, which mean that some people are able to be higher financial contributors to the city than others (Mayer, 2019).

What other reasons have contributed to the fiscal problems of cities? Cities have experienced extensive shortfalls in revenue because states have reduced the amount of money that they provide for cities, and the cities have had decreased revenue from sales taxes, corporate taxes, and personal

income taxes. Funds from the federal government to states and cities have also been limited and are often earmarked for specific projects rather than for use in the general operating budget. These budget crises have forced states to cut funding to already-cash-strapped cities. Vital services, including police, firefighting, and public works, have been cut drastically, and the slashing of city budgets and programs may continue in some areas for years to come. As cities lose revenue, officials must decide to lay off or furlough employees, charge higher fees for services, and cancel major projects such as street repairs or infrastructure improvements such as building a new water treatment facility.

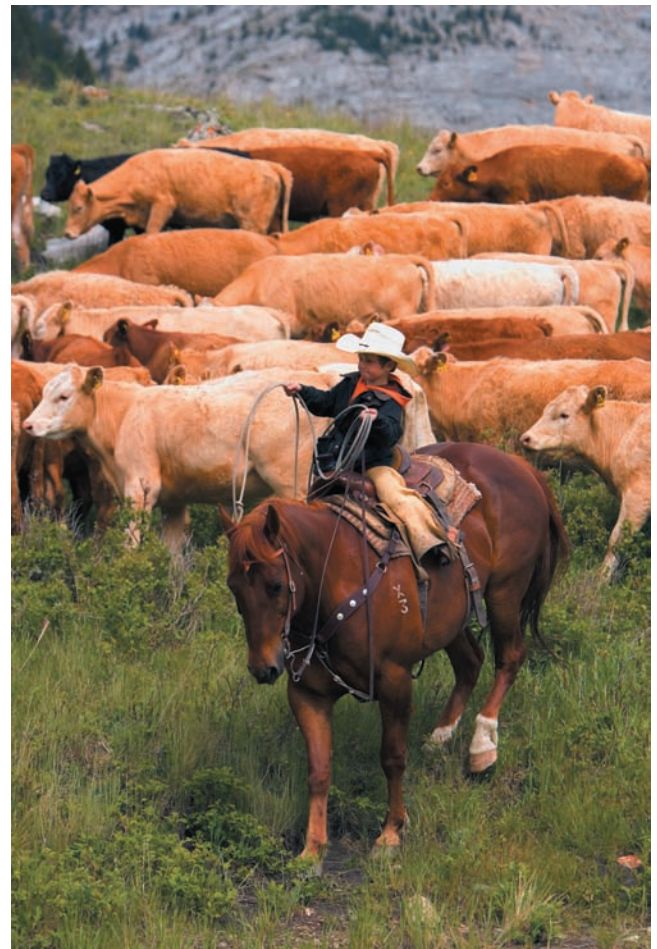
City officials continue to urge leaders at the state and federal levels to create new programs that will help cities meet their residents' needs. Demands are specifically being made for more federal funding through job-creation programs and other economic stimulus packages. Some analysts believe that inaction at the state and federal levels may create even greater financial chaos by forcing some cities into bankruptcy. Local officials emphasize that the state of America's cities continues to threaten the long-term national economic recovery (National League of Cities, 2019). It remains to be seen what the eventual effects of these continuing fiscal crises will be on various cities throughout the nation.

Rural Community Issues in the United States

Although most people think of the United States as highly urbanized, slightly less than 20 percent of the U.S. population resides in rural areas, identified as communities of 2,500 people or less by the U.S. Census Bureau in 1950 (■ Figure 15.17). Some definitions no longer place a population figure on what constitutes a rural area. Historically, sociologists identified *rural communities* as small, sparsely settled areas that had a relatively homogeneous population of people who primarily engage in agriculture. However, rural communities today are much more diverse than this definition suggests.

Unlike the standard migration patterns from rural to urban places in the past, recently more people have moved from large urban areas and suburbs into rural areas. Many of those leaving urban areas today want to escape the high cost of living, crime, traffic congestion, and environmental pollution that make daily life difficult. Technological advances make it easier for people to move to outlying rural areas and still be connected to urban centers if they need to be. The proliferation of computers, smartphones, commuter airlines, and highway systems has made previously remote areas seem much more accessible to many people. However, many recent immigrants to rural areas do not face some traditional problems experienced by long-term rural residents, particularly farmers, small-business owners, teachers, doctors, and other medical personnel, in these rural communities.

For many people in rural areas who have made their livelihood through farming and other agricultural endeavors,



Carson Ganci/Design Pics/Newscom

FIGURE 15.17 About 20 percent of the U.S. population resides in rural areas. Are children's experiences different when they grow up in a rural setting? What are the benefits and limitations of living in a rural area?

recent decades have been very difficult, both financially and emotionally. Rural crises such as natural disasters, droughts, crop failures, and the loss of small businesses in the community have had a negative effect on many adults and their children. Like their urban counterparts, rural families have experienced problems of divorce, alcoholism, abuse, and other crises, but these issues have sometimes been exacerbated by such events as the loss of the family farm or business. Because home is also the center of work in farming families, the loss of the farm may also mean the loss of family and social life and the loss of things dear to children such as their 4-H projects—often an animal that a child raises to show and sell. Some rural children and adolescents are also subject to injuries associated with farm work, such as from livestock kicks or crushing, from falling out of a tractor or a pickup truck, and from operating machinery designed for adults, that are not typically experienced by their urban counterparts.

Economic opportunities are limited in many rural areas, and average salaries are typically lower than in urban areas, based on the assumption that a family can live on

less money in rural communities than in cities. An example is rural teachers, who earn substantially less than their urban and suburban counterparts. Some rural areas have lost many teachers and administrators to higher-paying districts.

Although many of the problems we have examined in this book are intensified in rural areas, one of the most pressing is the availability of health services and doctors. Recently, some medical schools have established clinics and practices in outlying rural regions of the states in which they are located in an effort to increase the number of physicians available to rural residents. Typically, physicians who have just started to practice medicine have chosen to work in large urban centers with accessible high-tech medical facilities. Because of the pressing time constraints of tending to patients with life-threatening problems, the availability of community clinics and hospitals in rural areas may be a life-or-death matter for some residents. The loss of these facilities can have a devastating effect on people's health and life chances.

In addition to the movement of some urban-dwellers to rural areas, two other factors have changed the face of rural America in some regions. One is the proliferation of superstores, such as Walmart, PetSmart, Lowe's, and Home Depot. In some cases, these superstores have effectively put small businesses such as hardware stores and drug stores out of business because local merchants cannot meet the prices established by these large-volume discount chains. The development of superstores and outlet malls along the rural highways of this country has raised new concerns about environmental issues such as air and water pollution and has brought about new questions regarding whether these stores benefit the rural communities where they are located.

A second factor that has changed the face of some rural areas (and is sometimes related to the growth of superstores and outlet malls) is an increase in tourism in rural America. The vast majority of adults in the United States have taken a trip to a rural destination, usually for leisure purposes, over the past few years. Tourism produces jobs; however, many of the positions are for food servers, retail clerks, and hospitality workers, who are often in low-paying, seasonal jobs that have few benefits. Tourism may improve a community's tax base, but this does not occur when the outlet malls, hotels, and fast-food restaurants are located outside of the rural community's taxing authority, as frequently occurs when developers decide where to locate malls and other tourist amenities.

Looking Ahead: Population and Urbanization in the Future

In the future, even with population decreases in some regions, rapid population growth is inevitable. World population is projected to grow from more than 7.7 billion in 2018 to 9.5 billion in 2050, and to 10.6 billion in 2085 (see ■ Figure 15.18). Nearly all of this growth in population is occurring in low-income nations, mostly in Africa and

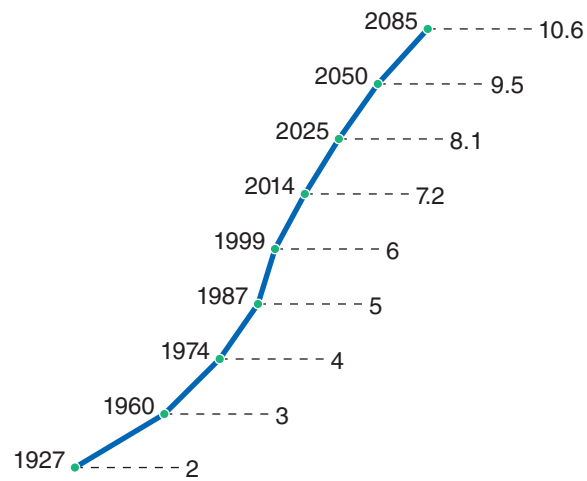


FIGURE 15.18 Increase in the World's Population in Billions of People

Source: United Nations World Urbanization Prospects Report, 2014.

Asia. Higher population growth in low-income countries stems from the higher total fertility rates—the average lifetime number of births per woman in a population. In sub-Saharan Africa, for example, women have an average of nearly five children in their lifetime. Worldwide, however, total fertility rates have declined significantly.

According to *World Population Prospects 2019*, the world population is still growing despite the fact that some countries are experiencing a decrease in their total population and that growth of the population is at a slower pace than in the past. By 2100 it is estimated that the population worldwide will be approximately 10.9 billion if there are not major disasters or other crises that drastically reduce the size of the population (see Chapter 16). If the projected increases occur, such a level of continued population growth will create additional problems for sustainable development. The problem will be especially acute in the least developed countries of the world because they are among the fastest growing.

According to the United Nations (2019b), major factors that will influence world population prospects are the following:

- The world's population will continue to grow but at a slower rate.
- Some countries and regions face crucial challenges related to rapid population growth driven by high fertility.
- Population size is decreasing in some countries due to sustained low fertility or emigration as people exit the country.
- Countries with a recent decline in fertility will have new opportunities to create demographic conditions favorable to accelerated economic growth.
- An unprecedented aging of the world's population is occurring, and we do not know the full effects this change will have on communities and societies.

- Along with the global increase in longevity and the possible narrowing gap between rich and poor countries, significant disparities in survival will still persist across countries and regions.
- International migration will become an increasingly important determinant of population growth and change in some parts of the world.

What all of these factors may ultimately mean for population growth and change remains to be seen, particularly in light of global political and social unrest and problems related to climate change that already have adversely affected people in many nations. According to the United Nations (2019b), it is possible for societies to adapt to demographic realities if leaders anticipate future trends and incorporate that information into the planning and policies that various governments implement. For example, economic growth is critical to support a growing global population, and provision must be made for this development and growth. Plans must be made for an increase in the percentage of older persons in their populations and for ways to ensure the well-being of older persons by protecting their human rights, economic security, and overall well-being through health care services, learning opportunities, and support networks.

In regard to the future of urbanization, the United Nations (2019c) projects that urban areas will absorb virtually all of the future growth of the world's population. Although rapid urban growth creates opportunities, it also poses challenges to urban development plans that hope to make cities more inclusive to all people, safe, resilient, and sustainable. The United Nations (2015) has set forth seventeen Sustainable Development Goals that would benefit cities throughout the world:

1. No poverty
2. Zero hunger
3. Good health and well-being
4. Quality education
5. Gender equality
6. Clean water and sanitation
7. Affordable and clean energy
8. Decent work and economic growth
9. Industry, innovation, and infrastructure
10. Reduced inequalities
11. Sustainable cities and communities
12. Responsible consumption and production

13. Climate action
14. Life below water being protected and preserved
15. Life on land being protected and preserved
16. Peace, justice, and strong institutions
17. Partnerships to help achieve these goals

Even as the author lists these from a United Nations publication, I think how wonderful a world we might have if all, or even most, of these goals could be met, and it occurs to me that the only way they will ever be met is if responsible people start taking action on them immediately rather than debating or otherwise delaying the merits of trying to bring about a better quality and more quantity of life for all people.

We have talked a lot about the world: What is the future of urban development? As the United Nations states, "The future of the world's population is urban." Therefore, the policies that are implemented in urban areas are extremely important. Urbanization is related to three important dimensions of sustainable development: economic, societal, and environmental. Now and in the future, it is important to have "well-managed urbanization" in which the benefits of large population size are maximized while environmental degradation and other adverse impacts of having large numbers of city-dwellers are minimized. Planning and allocation of adequate resources are crucial to reach this goal. One of the most important keys to achieving sustainable development is to reduce or eliminate inequalities that contribute to poverty, pollution, health risks, and shorter life expectancy rates. Dealing with the problem of global warming and natural disasters is another crucial issue that affects cities. How we use land and natural resources is a central issue in determining whether we are successful in creating an environmentally sustainable future in the urban and rural areas and the world as a whole.

In sum, as you can see from this discussion, global population and urbanization now and in the future are all linked. At the macrolevel we may be able to do little about population and urbanization; however, at the microlevel we may be able to exercise some degree of control over our communities and our lives. Reclaiming public space for daily life would be an important start, along with making neighborhoods more sustainable and helping inhabitants feel that they have a vested interest in their own community. Hopefully, we will also have found a way to curb random violence and acts of terrorism that produce great harm and keep people living in a state of fear and consternation rather than moving forward for the betterment of themselves and future generations.

Q&A Chapter Review

Use these questions and answers to check how well you've achieved the learning objectives set out at the beginning of this chapter.

LO1 What is demography, and what are the three processes that produce population changes?

Demography is a subfield of sociology that examines population size, composition, and distribution. Populations change as the result of fertility (births), mortality (deaths), and migration.

LO2 What is meant by population composition, and how is it measured?

Changes in fertility, mortality, and migration affect the population composition—the biological and social characteristics of a population, including age, sex, race, marital status, education, occupation, income, and size of household. One measure of population composition is the sex ratio—the number of males for every hundred females in a given population.

LO3 What are the Malthusian, Marxist, neo-Malthusian, and demographic transition perspectives on population?

The Malthusian perspective came into being more than two hundred years ago when Thomas Malthus warned that overpopulation would result in poverty, starvation, and other major problems that would limit the size of the population. According to Malthus, the population would increase geometrically while the food supply would increase only arithmetically, resulting in a critical food shortage and poverty. The Marxist perspective is attributed to Karl Marx, who argued that poverty is the result of capitalist greed, not overpopulation. More recently, the neo-Malthusian perspective has reemphasized the dangers of overpopulation and encouraged zero population growth. The demographic transition perspective links population growth to four stages of economic development: (1) the preindustrial stage, with high birthrates and death rates; (2) early industrialization, with relatively high birthrates and a decline in death rates; (3) advanced industrialization and urbanization, with low birthrates and death rates; and (4) postindustrialization, with additional decreases in the birthrate coupled with a stable death rate.

LO4 What are four major international migration theories?

The *neoclassical economic approach* assumes that migration patterns occur based on geographic differences in the supply of and demand for labor. The *new households economics of migration* approach emphasizes the part

that families or households play in migration. *Split-labor-market theory* suggests that immigrants from low-income countries are often recruited for secondary labor market positions, whereas migrants from higher-income countries may migrate for primary-sector employment. *World systems theory* views migration as linked to the problems caused by capitalist development around the world.

LO5 Discuss the process of urbanization and explain the growth of cities through preindustrial, industrial, and postindustrial phases.

Urbanization is defined as the increasing number of people who live in the cities or urban areas. The term is also used to refer to an increase in the size and composition of those cities. Population growth and migration are two key factors in urbanization. Three preconditions must be present in order for a city to develop: a favorable physical environment, an advanced technology, and a well-developed social organization. The largest preindustrial city was Rome; by 100 CE, it may have had a population of 650,000. The Industrial Revolution changed the nature of the city. Emergent technology, including new forms of transportation and agricultural production, made it easier for people to leave the countryside and move to the city. Postindustrial cities increasingly rely on an economic structure that is based on scientific knowledge rather than industrial production. Postindustrial cities emerged when economies shifted from manufacturing and other secondary production to tertiary (service and information-processing) production. Postindustrial cities have experienced rapid growth, increases in highly paid professional jobs, and greater levels of inequality between persons at the top and at the bottom of the socioeconomic ladder.

LO6 How do functionalist models compare with political economy/conflict models of urban life and growth?

Functionalists view urban growth in terms of ecological models. The *concentric zone model* sees the city as a series of circular areas, each characterized by a different type of land use. The *sector model* describes urban growth in terms of terrain and transportation routes. The *multiple nuclei model* views cities as having numerous centers of development from which growth radiates. One perspective in contemporary urban ecology is *social area* analysis, which examines urban populations in terms of economic status, family status, and ethnic classifications. According

to political economy models/conflict perspectives, urban growth is influenced by capital investment decisions, class and class conflict, and government subsidy programs. Conflict models often focus on uneven development, such as in affluent gated communities and other wealthy urban enclaves, and in how gender regimes influence how people think, feel, and act in highly dense and very diverse urban areas. At the global level, capitalism also influences the development of cities in core, peripheral, and semiperipheral nations.

LO7 How does the symbolic interactionist perspective describe the experience of urban life?

Symbolic interactionist perspectives focus on how people experience urban life. Some analysts view the urban experience positively; others believe that urban-dwellers become insensitive to events and to people around them.

LO8 What are some of the major problems of cities around the world? How does the growth of suburbs, edge cities, and exurban areas change the nature of city life?

Rapid population growth is a major problem in many cities because it affects essential services such as health, education, transportation, and sanitation, which are already strained in many cities. Nonexistent or aging infrastructure, such as bridges, highways, and mass-transit systems, make it increasingly difficult for a growing population to travel to work and other necessary destinations. These problems are further compounded by the growth of suburbs, edge cities, and exurban areas, which create an urban sprawl as more people move to locations farther out that place them at greater distances from their work, public amenities, and other things that draw them back into the central cities. However, many of these outlying areas often have economic development that brings jobs closer to where people are residing and other amenities, such as shopping areas, schools, and restaurants, are now built in these outlying areas where there is no necessity to go into the central city for these activities.

LO9 What are some of the major rural community issues in the United States?

Some people have sought to escape dense urban areas by moving into rural communities, but sometimes they have brought problems along with them. The need for much more housing, new technologies, better roads and schools,

and other necessities have left rural areas without adequate infrastructure and local governance to provide some of the needs and demands of newly arrived former city-dwellers. For many people who have spent their entire lives in rural areas and who made their living through farming and other agricultural endeavors, hard times make life difficult in rural areas because of droughts; crop failures; natural disasters such as fires, floods, and tornadoes; and loss of small businesses to big-box stores. Some big-box stores, like Walmart, move out of the community if their sales are not what shareholders expect, and this leaves the rural area in worse shape than before the population growth and economic development occurred.

LO10 What population and urbanization trends are likely in the twenty-first century?

In a worst-case scenario, central cities and nearby suburbs in the United States may experience bankruptcy, and the infrastructure of cities will be beyond repair. Areas that we currently think of as being relatively free from such problems will be characterized by depletion of natural resources; more frequent and more violent natural disasters such as fires, floods, and wind damage; and by greater environmental degradation that produces more air and water pollution. In a best-case scenario, the problems brought about by rapid population growth in low-income nations will be remedied by new technologies that make goods readily available to people.

In the United States, a best-case scenario for the future might include improvements in how taxes are collected and spent and how we focus on preserving our environment and quality of life rather than making decisions that focus on economic gain and self-interest rather than in more economic opportunities for everyone and a concern for the general welfare of all, not just individual people and powerful groups.

Global population and urbanization now and in the future are all linked. At the macrolevel we may be able to do little about population and urbanization; however, at the microlevel we may be able to exercise some degree of control over our communities and our lives. Reclaiming public space for daily life would be an important start, along with making neighborhoods more sustainable and helping inhabitants feel that they have a vested interest in their own community. Hopefully, we will also have found a way to curb random violence and acts of terrorism that produce great harm and keep people living in a state of fear and consternation rather than moving forward for the betterment of themselves and future generations.

Key Terms

crude birthrate 457

crude death rate 458

demographic transition 465

demography 456

fertility 457

gentrification 470

invasion 469

migration 459

mortality 458

population composition 461

population pyramid 462

sex ratio 461

succession 470

zero population growth 464

Questions for Critical Thinking

- 1 What impact does a relatively high rate of immigration have on culture in a nation? Does it affect personal identity? Why or why not?
- 2 If you were designing a study of growth patterns for the city where you live (or one you know well), which theoretical model(s) would provide the most useful framework for your analysis?
- 3 What do you think that everyday life in U.S. cities, suburbs, and rural areas will be like twenty years from the date you are reading this? Where would you prefer to live? What does your answer reflect about the future of U.S. cities?

Answers to **Sociology Quiz**

Migration and U.S. Immigration

1	False	Although the term <i>unauthorized immigrant</i> refers to a U.S. resident who is not a citizen of this country, who has not been admitted for permanent residence, or who does not have an authorized temporary status that permits longer-term residence and work, some “unauthorized immigrants” originally entered the country with valid visas but overstayed their visas’ expiration or otherwise violated the terms of their admission.
2	False	Although “push” factors are important in migrating to another country, “pull” factors are even more important. Pull factors include better job opportunities, family or friends who already reside in the country of destination, and other favorable conditions that draw them to their new destination.
3	True	The percentage of recent U.S. documented immigrants with at least a bachelor’s degree is nearly identical to that of native-born U.S. adults.
4	False	Research typically has not shown that immigrants increase unemployment in a region or lower wages among native workers.
5	True	The majority of children living in undocumented immigrant families (with at least one undocumented immigrant parent) in the United States were born in this country and have U.S. citizenship status.
6	True	In a Gallup Organization survey, the majority of Americans said they believe that unauthorized immigrant workers mostly take low-paying jobs that Americans don’t want.
7	True	To become a U.S. citizen, immigrants must go through an application process that includes taking a test on English and civics. To pass this test, applicants must demonstrate an ability to read, write, and speak simple words and phrases in English and must demonstrate a knowledge and understanding of U.S. history and government.
8	False	A non-U.S. citizen who marries a U.S. citizen is not automatically granted U.S. citizenship. To become a U.S. citizen, a foreign-born spouse of a U.S. citizen must meet certain requirements (e.g., must have been married to and living with his or her U.S. citizen spouse for the past three years) and must go through the citizenship application process.

Sources: Based on Congressional Budget Office, 2011; Gallup, 2011; Gibson and Jung, 2006; Gryn and Larsen, 2010; Kandel, 2011; Passel and Cohn, 2011; Shierholz, 2010; U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, 2011.



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& HEALTHCARE
WORKERS**

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1199SEIU
United Healthcare Workers East

**FIGHT FOR \$15
AND RAISE
AMERICA**



Collective Behavior, Social Movements, and Social Change

16

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- 1 Discuss** the key aspects of collective behavior.
- 2 Compare** the categories of crowds.
- 3 Describe** the major explanations of crowd behavior.
- 4 Describe** the concepts and types of mass behavior.
- 5 Discuss** the concepts and types of social movements.
- 6 Compare** the major theories of social movements.
- 7 Discuss** the aspects of social change from historical, contemporary, and future perspectives.

Bloomberg/Getty Images

SOCIOLOGY & **Everyday Life**

Collective Behavior, Climate Activism, and Environmental Issues

We are living in the sixth mass extinction. Ice is melting. Forests are burning. Waters are rising. And we do not even speak of it. Why?

Because admitting the facts means admitting crimes of epic proportions by living our daily lives. Because counting the losses means being overpowered by grief. Because allowing the scale of the crisis means facing the fear of swiftly impending disaster and the fact that our entire system must change.

But now is not the time to ignore science in order to save our feelings. It is time to be terrified, enraged, heartbroken, grief-stricken, radical.

—Hannah Laga Abram, an 18-year-old from Santa Fe, New Mexico, participated, along with more than one million other students worldwide, in a Friday movement to skip school and protest government inaction on climate change (qtd. in Glenza et al., 2019)

I'm striking Friday because I live in Philadelphia, a city I love with my whole heart. Philadelphia is one of the most polluted major cities in the United States. At least 50% of our air pollution comes from fossil fuel projects around the city, most of which are located in low-income communities of color. . . . I'm striking because I feel like I have run out of ways to communicate to my elected officials; that climate inaction is violence; and that my life, air and future, and those of every other 17-year-old—every young person—is on the line.



Rick Beaugrand/Shutterstock.com

Young people are becoming active participants in collective behavior and social movements for causes that are important to them. This Youth Climate Strike in Bellingham, Washington, was ignited by Greta Thunberg, a young environmental activist on climate change who lives in Sweden but has gained international recognition for her work.

As young people have seen what they consider to be political officials' failure to adequately address the climate crisis worldwide, tens of thousands of young people have taken time off from school to march through the streets of various cities around the globe and call attention to the need for change while there is hopefully still time to save the earth from planet-warming greenhouse gas emissions. Lead by Greta Thunberg, a then 16-year-old girl from Sweden who was named *Time* magazine's "Person of the Year" and nominated for a Nobel Prize in 2019, students from all over the world took to the streets to demand change and their voices were heard. Now, whether significant changes occur as a result of their ongoing activism remains to be seen, but this is how many social movements that have brought about social change initially started throughout history.

A variety of demonstrations and protests are a part of daily life in the twenty-first century. Social media, the Internet, TV, and newspapers continually inform us about new or unresolved social, political, economic, or environmental concerns. As the chapter's opening narrative suggests, a key message of social movements is that people need to act collectively and often immediately to produce various kinds

of social change, including doing something about detrimental climate change and reducing environmental degradation. For many activists, social change is essential for the improvement, or survival, of the entire planet.

What do you think of when you hear the term *social change*? For sociologists, **social change** is the alteration, modification, or transformation of public policy, culture, or social institutions over time. But social change does not occur of its own accord: It is usually brought about by collective behavior and social movements. In this chapter we will examine collective behavior, social movements, and social change from a sociological perspective. We use climate change activism and the environmental movement as examples of how people try to use mass mobilization to bring about social transformation. Movements such as this are not new: earlier protests about degradation of the environment started as early as the 1930s and culminated in the publication of *Silent Spring* (1962) by Rachel Carson, as discussed later in the chapter. Although specific acts of collective behavior and certain social movements may come and go, core themes of concern often remain similar. Before reading on, test your knowledge about collective behavior, climate change activism, and environmental movements by taking the "Sociology and Everyday Life" quiz. ●

—Abigail Leedy, age seventeen, from Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, demonstrates how passionate many young people in the United States and throughout the world are about climate change and their willingness to

participate in rallies inspired by young leaders such as Greta Thunberg of Stockholm, Sweden (qtd. in Glenza et al., 2019)

How Much Do You Know About Collective Behavior, Climate Change, and Environmental Activism?

TRUE	FALSE	
T	F	1 Greenhouse gases (certain gases in the atmosphere that trap heat and warm the earth) make the largest contribution to global warming in the twenty-first century.
T	F	2 The climate change policies first introduced in the United States started in the early 2000s.
T	F	3 People who hold strong attitudes regarding climate change and environmental degradation are very likely to be involved in social movements to protect the environment and reduce climate change.
T	F	4 Environmental and climate change groups may engage in civil disobedience or use symbolic gestures to call attention to their issue.
T	F	5 People are most likely to believe rumors when no other information is readily available on a topic.
T	F	6 Influencing public opinion is a very important activity for many social movements.
T	F	7 Most social movements in the United States seek to improve society by changing some specific aspect of the social structure.
T	F	8 Sociologists have found that people in a community respond very similarly to natural disasters and to disasters caused by technological failures.

Answers can be found at the end of the chapter.

Collective Behavior

Collective behavior is voluntary, often spontaneous activity that is engaged in by a large number of people and typically violates dominant-group norms and values. Unlike the *organizational behavior* found in corporations and voluntary associations (such as labor unions and environmental organizations), collective behavior lacks an official division of labor, hierarchy of authority, and established rules and procedures. Unlike *institutional behavior* (in education, religion, or politics, for example), it lacks institutionalized norms to govern behavior. Collective behavior can take various forms, including crowds, mobs, riots, panics, fads, fashions, and public opinion.

Early sociologists studied collective behavior because they lived in a world that was responding to the processes of modernization, including urbanization, industrialization, and the proletarianization of workers. Contemporary forms of collective behavior, such as environmental movements and climate change protests, are variations on the theme

that originated during the transition from feudalism to capitalism and the rise of modernity in Europe. Some forms of collective behavior and social movements are directed toward public issues such as air pollution, water pollution, and the exploitation of workers in global sweatshops by transnational corporations. According to a study by the Pew Research Center, about two-thirds of U.S. adults (67 percent) believe the federal government is doing too little to reduce the effects of climate change, and about the same percentage say that the government's efforts to protect air and water quality are also inadequate (Funk and Hefferon, 2019). For

social change

the alteration, modification, or transformation of public policy, culture, or social institutions over time.

collective behavior

voluntary, often spontaneous activity that is engaged in by a large number of people and typically violates dominant-group norms and values.

this reason, many individual residents of all ages believe that they must shoulder the responsibility of calling out the problem of climate change and environmental degradation and make every effort to bring about changes in their personal lives that will positively affect the environment and to call on national and global leaders to do something about slowing climate change.

Conditions for Collective Behavior

Collective behavior occurs as a result of some common influence or stimulus that produces a response from a collectivity. A *collectivity* is a number of people who act together and may mutually transcend, bypass, or subvert established institutional patterns and structures. Three major factors contribute to the likelihood that collective behavior will occur: (1) structural factors that increase the chances of people responding in a particular way, (2) timing, and (3) a breakdown in social control mechanisms and a corresponding feeling of normlessness.

Collective behavior often begins when there are structural factors that make people aware that a problem exists, and then a common stimulus further encourages them to respond to the problem in some specific manner. As previously mentioned, the publication of *Silent Spring* (1962) by former U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service biologist Rachel Carson is credited with triggering collective behavior directed at demanding a clean environment and questioning how much power that large corporations should have in the United States. Carson described the dangers of pesticides such as DDT, which was then being promoted by the chemical industry as the miracle that could give the United States the unchallenged position as food supplier to the world (Griswold, 2012). However, people, birds, and fish in the United States were experiencing health-related problems, and the purity of the waterways was being threatened. Many people were ready to acknowledge that problems existed. By writing *Silent Spring*, Carson made people aware of the hazards of chemicals in their foods and the destruction of wildlife. She also encouraged people to question the industries that they had entrusted with their lives and their resources, causing more people to demand accountability where pollution was occurring. These public outcries led to investigations throughout the United States as people demanded legal recognition of the right to a clean environment.

Finally, a breakdown in social control mechanisms is another powerful force in triggering collective behavior regarding environmental protection and degradation. During the 1970s, people in the “Love Canal” area of Niagara Falls, New

York, became aware that their neighborhood and their children’s school had been built over a canal where tons of poisonous waste had been dumped by a chemical company between 1930 and 1950. Over the next two decades an oily black substance began oozing into the homes in the area and killing the trees and grass on the lots; schoolchildren reported mysterious illnesses and feelings of malaise. Tests indicated that the dump site contained more than two hundred different chemicals, many of which could cause cancer or other serious health problems. Upon learning this information, Lois Gibbs, a mother of one of the schoolchildren, began a grassroots campaign to force government officials to relocate community members injured by seepages from the chemical dump (■ Figure 16.1). The collective behavior of neighborhood volunteers was not only successful in eventually bringing about social change but also inspired others to engage in collective behavior regarding environmental problems in their communities.

Similarly, the issue of global warming and the detrimental effects that the burning of fossil fuels might have on climate change encouraged activists to call people’s attention to the need for divestment as both a symbolic and a financial gesture because of the harm being created. In 1988 James Hansen of NASA provided testimony before the U.S. Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, and NASA compiled a list (see <https://climate.nasa.gov/effects/>) documenting the effects of climate change—such as the loss of sea ice, accelerated sea-level rise, and the presence of longer and more intense heat waves—on the global environment. Shortly after Hansen gave his congressional testimony on the effects of global warming, Bill McKibben wrote a widely read book, *The End of Nature* (1989), about climate



William Campbell/Sigma/Getty Images

FIGURE 16.1 The Love Canal area of Niagara Falls, New York, has been the site of protests and other forms of collective behavior because of hazardous environmental pollution. Original protests in the 1970s, demanding a cleanup of the site, were followed in the 1990s by new protests, this time over the proposed resettlement of the area.

change. McKibben also founded 350.org, a grassroots climate change movement that helped launch the fossil fuel divestment movement.

However, something much more drastic is occurring in the second and third decades of the twenty-first century where, unlike earlier climate-change protests, activists today are seeing an immediate urgency to make a difference now because of the continual devastation that is caused by climate change. In the past, climate change was discussed as a problem of the future—something that might occur many years later and in some distant area of the world. But now, many people are seeing that climate change is a pressing problem right now as extreme weather events attributed to climate change have occurred each year since 2011 and continue to occur across six continents and two oceans. These environmental crises have ranged from devastating heat-waves in Europe and the Mediterranean to deadly flooding in Asian nations, massive forest fires in the United States, and droughts in Africa that have left people with severe food shortages; we could continue to list at great length all the disasters that have occurred in this century. All of this devastation has made many people more aware that collective behavior will be required to bring about the necessary social changes to save the planet.

Dynamics of Collective Behavior

To better understand the dynamics of collective behavior, let's briefly examine several questions. First, how do people come to transcend, bypass, or subvert established institutional patterns and structures? Historically, many environmental activists found that they could not get their point across unless they went outside established institutional patterns and organizations. For example, activist Lois Gibbs and other Love Canal residents in the Niagara Falls area initially tried to work within established means through the school administration and state health officials to clean up their environmental problem. However, they quickly learned that their problems were not being solved through "official" channels. As the problem appeared to grow worse, "official" responses became more defensive and obscure. Accordingly, some residents began acting outside of established norms by holding protests and strikes (Gibbs, 1982).

Like Lois Gibbs, climate activist Greta Thunberg realized that if she did not get young people involved in doing something about climate change, nothing might occur until it was too late. She organized the Fridays for Future school walkouts and, in some cases, got permission from school officials for students to miss school on Friday so that they could hold strikes outside the Swedish Parliament. Through social media and global media coverage of these events on television, students in the United States, Australia, New Zealand, Asia, Europe, and South America began to skip school on Friday to protest government inaction on climate change. It is estimated that there may have been more than two thousand protests in one hundred twenty-five countries as a result of Thunberg's efforts. Some situations are more

conducive to collective behavior than others. Social media has made it possible for people to communicate quickly and easily with one another, and this makes spontaneous behavior much more likely. In the past, when people are gathered together in one general location (whether lining the streets or assembled in a massive stadium), they were able to respond to a common stimulus. Today, people around the world can respond to common stimuli even though they are thousands of miles apart.

Second, how do people's actions compare with their attitudes? People's attitudes (as expressed in public opinion surveys, for instance) are not always reflected in their political and social behavior. Issues pertaining to the environment are no exception. For example, people may indicate in survey research that they believe that the quality of the environment is very important, but the same people may not turn out on Election Day to support propositions that protect the environment or candidates who promise to focus on environmental issues. Likewise, individuals who indicate on a questionnaire that they are concerned about increases in ground-level ozone—the primary component of urban smog—often drive single-occupant, oversized vehicles that government studies have shown to be "gas guzzlers" that contribute to lowered air quality in urban areas. As a result, smog levels increase, contributing to human respiratory problems and dramatically reduced agricultural crop yields.

Third, why do people act collectively rather than singly? Many people believe that there is strength in numbers, whether they are attending a rock concert or protesting an injustice in society. Individuals may act as a collectivity when they believe it is the only way to fight those with greater power and resources. Collective behavior is not just the sum total of a large number of persons acting at the same time; rather, it reflects people's joint response to some common influence or stimulus.

Distinctions Regarding Collective Behavior

People engaging in collective behavior may be divided into crowds and masses. A **crowd** is a relatively large number of people who are in one another's immediate vicinity. Examples of crowds include the audience in a movie theater or people at a pep rally for a sporting event. By contrast, a **mass** is a number of people who share an interest in a specific idea or issue but who are not in one another's immediate vicinity. An example is the popularity of social media. Through these forms of instantaneous communication,

crowd

a relatively large number of people who are in one another's immediate vicinity.

mass

a number of people who share an interest in a specific idea or issue but who are not in one another's immediate vicinity.

people express their views on everyday life and on larger social issues such as climate change, economic crises, and environmental degradation. Individuals who read what someone has posted and make comments in response usually share a common interest, even if these individuals have not met in a face-to-face encounter and may not agree on other issues.

Collective behavior may also be distinguished by the dominant emotion expressed. The *dominant emotion* refers to the “publicly expressed feeling perceived by participants and observers as the most prominent in an episode of collective behavior” (Lofland, 1993: 72). Fear, hostility, and joy are three fundamental emotions found in collective behavior; however, grief, disgust, surprise, or shame may also predominate in some forms of collective behavior (Lofland, 1993). Think of recent political rallies you have seen on TV or in person: What were the dominant emotions being expressed by participants?

Types of Crowd Behavior

When we think of a crowd, many of us think of *aggregates*, previously defined as a collection of people who happen to be in the same place at the same time but who share little else in common. For example, think of thousands of people stranded in an airport when harsh weather or other conditions make it impossible for them to board flights and head for their destinations. Although stranded businesspeople and tourists are together in the airport, they do not necessarily share anything in common. Moreover, the presence of a relatively large number of people in the same location does not necessarily produce collective behavior. To help explain this phenomenon, early symbolic interactionist sociologist Herbert Blumer (1946) developed a typology that divides crowds into four categories: casual, conventional, expressive, and acting. Other scholars have added a fifth category, protest crowds.

Casual and Conventional Crowds *Casual crowds* are relatively large gatherings of people who happen to be in the same place at the same time; if they interact at all, it is only briefly. People shopping in a big-box store or are riding on a subway car are examples of casual crowds. Other than sharing a momentary interest, such as trying to be the first customer in a store on Black Friday to take advantage of a big sale on a mega-screen TV, a casual crowd has nothing in common.

Conventional crowds are made up of people who come together for a scheduled event and thus share a common focus. Examples include religious services, graduation ceremonies, concerts, and college lectures. Each of these events has preestablished schedules and norms. Because these events occur regularly, interaction among participants is much more likely; in turn, the events would not occur without the crowd, which is essential to the event (■ Figure 16.2).



AP Images/John Minichillo

FIGURE 16.2 Look closely at the bottom of this photo of Times Square in New York City, where millions of people have come together for a New Year's Eve celebration. Many people who do not know one another are standing in close proximity as they share a special occasion with other individuals who are experiencing similar emotions. According to sociologists, what kind of crowd does this constitute?

Expressive and Acting Crowds *Expressive crowds* provide opportunities for the expression of some strong emotion (such as joy, excitement, or grief). People release their pent-up emotions in conjunction with other persons experiencing similar emotions. Examples include worshippers at religious services; mourners lining the streets when a celebrity, public official, or religious leader has died; and revelers assembled at Mardi Gras or on New Year's Eve at Times Square in New York.

Acting crowds are collectivities so intensely focused on a specific purpose or object that they may erupt into violent or destructive behavior. Mobs, riots, and panics are examples of acting crowds, but casual and conventional crowds may become acting crowds under some circumstances. A **mob** is a highly emotional crowd whose members engage in, or are ready to engage in, violence against a specific target—a person, a category of people, or physical property. Mob behavior in this country has included lynchings, fire bombings, effigy hangings, and hate crimes. Mob violence tends to dissipate relatively quickly once a target has been injured, killed, or destroyed.

Compared with mob actions, riots may be of somewhat longer duration. A **riot** is violent crowd behavior that is fueled by deep-seated emotions but not directed at one specific target. Riots are often triggered by fear, anger, and hostility; however, not all riots are caused by deep-seated hostility and hatred—people may be expressing joy and exuberance when rioting occurs. Examples include celebrations after sports victories that turn into riots when fans storm athletic courts or fields or when they go out and riot in the streets.

A **panic** is a form of crowd behavior that occurs when a large number of people react to a real or perceived threat with strong emotions and self-destructive behavior. The most common type of panic occurs when people seek to escape from a perceived danger, fearing that few (if any) of them will be able to get away from that danger. Examples include passengers on a sinking cruise ship or persons in a burning nightclub. Panics can also arise in response to larger social, financial, or political conditions that people believe are beyond their control—such as a major disruption in the economy. A “bank run” in which hundreds or thousands of customers seek to take out all of their money at the same time, fearing that the financial institution is becoming insolvent, is an example. Although panics are relatively rare, they receive massive media coverage because they provoke strong feelings of fear in readers and viewers and the number of casualties may be large. An example was a tragic garment factory blaze in Bangladesh in which more than one hundred workers died as fire gutted the large manufacturing warehouse and panic-stricken workers jammed a stairwell trying to escape their workplace.

Protest Crowds Sociologists Clark McPhail and Ronald T. Wohlstein (1983) added protest crowds to the four types of crowds identified by Blumer. *Protest crowds* engage in activities intended to achieve specific political goals. Examples include sit-ins, marches, boycotts, blockades, and strikes (■ Figure 16.3). Some protests take the form of **civil disobedience**—nonviolent action that seeks to change a policy or law by refusing to comply with it. Some of the climate activists have organized protests inspired by social justice movements in the past, such as those led by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., where protesters march in the streets and occupy places of commerce or political power. The Green New Deal—the climate policy goals that Sunrise Movement activists brought to the halls of Congress—addressed the necessity of building economic and political space for the most vulnerable communities that were being affected by climate change as the focus of society transitioned to a new energy economy (Tigue, 2019). Acts of civil disobedience may become violent, as in a confrontation between protesters and police officers. In this case, a protest crowd becomes an *acting crowd*. Since the 1960s when African American students and sympathetic whites used sit-ins at lunch counters and other locations to call attention to racial injustice and to demand social change, periodically across the decades there have been other acting crowds similarly engaged in protests that escalate into violent confrontations even when that was not the intent of the organizers. At the bottom line, protest crowds seek to change some aspect of the status quo. But some protest crowds state specific demands, such as calling attention to policy changes that corporations or governmental agencies must make to limit global warming that is harming the environment.



FIGURE 16.3 Protest crowds are often confronted by law enforcement personnel such as the officials who showed up with tear gas to repeal crowds protesting their paltry pensions, the country's fragile safety net, and police brutality in the streets of Santiago, Chile.

In sum, people with many different issues take their concerns to the streets, as well as to mainstream and social media, to have their voices heard about problems that they believe need to be addressed.

Explanations of Crowd Behavior

What causes people to act collectively? How do they determine what types of action to take? One of the earliest theorists to provide an answer to these questions was Gustave Le Bon (1841–1931), a French scholar who focused on crowd psychology in his contagion theory.

Contagion Theory *Contagion theory* focuses on the social-psychological aspects of collective behavior; it attempts to explain how moods, attitudes, and behavior are communicated rapidly and why they are accepted by others. Le Bon (1960/1895) argued that people are more likely to engage in antisocial behavior in a crowd because they are anonymous and feel invulnerable. Le Bon suggested that a crowd takes on a life of its own that is larger than the beliefs or actions of any one person. Because of its anonymity, the

mob

a highly emotional crowd whose members engage in, or are ready to engage in, violence against a specific target—a person, a category of people, or physical property.

riot

violent crowd behavior that is fueled by deep-seated emotions but not directed at one specific target.

panic

a form of crowd behavior that occurs when a large number of people react to a real or perceived threat with strong emotions and self-destructive behavior.

civil disobedience

nonviolent action that seeks to change a policy or law by refusing to comply with it.

crowd transforms individuals from rational beings into a single organism with a collective mind. In essence, Le Bon asserted that emotions such as fear and hate are contagious in crowds because people experience a decline in personal responsibility; they will do things as a collectivity that they would never do when acting alone.

Le Bon's theory is still used by many people to explain crowd behavior. However, critics argue that the "collective mind" has not been documented by systematic studies.

Social Unrest and Circular Reaction Sociologist Robert E. Park was the first U.S. sociologist to investigate crowd behavior. Park believed that Le Bon's analysis of collective behavior lacked several important elements. Intrigued that people could break away from the powerful hold of culture and their established routines to develop a new social order, Park added the concepts of social unrest and circular reaction to contagion theory. According to Park (Park and Burgess, 1921), social unrest is transmitted by a process of *circular reaction*—the interactive communication between persons such that the discontent of one person is communicated to another, who, in turn, reflects the discontent back to the first person.

Convergence Theory *Convergence theory* focuses on the shared emotions, goals, and beliefs that many people may bring to crowd behavior. Because of their individual characteristics, many people have a predisposition to participate in certain types of activities. From this perspective, people with similar attributes find a collectivity of like-minded persons with whom they can express their underlying personal tendencies. Although people may reveal their "true selves" in crowds, their behavior is not irrational; it is highly predictable to those who share similar emotions or beliefs.

Convergence theory has been applied to a wide array of conduct, from lynch mobs to climate activism. In a now-classic study of lynching, social psychologist Hadley Cantril (1941) found that the participants shared certain common attributes: They were poor and working-class whites who felt that their status was threatened by the presence of more successful African Americans. Consequently, the characteristics of these individuals made them susceptible to joining a lynch mob even if they did not know the target of the lynching.

More recently, climate activists are a good example of people who bring shared emotions, goals, and beliefs to crowd behavior. Many of the participants have a predisposition to participate in activities such as these because it is a chance to reveal their true selves in crowds and to bond together with others who are interested in social justice and problems associated with climate change. In the twenty-first century, transnational actors such as states, corporations, global governance entities, social movements, and others have converged to develop political strategies and deal with concerns in areas ranging from the Navajo Nation to Indonesia and West Africa through alliance-building (Tramel, 2018).

Convergence theory adds to our understanding of certain types of collective behavior by pointing out how individuals may have certain attributes—such as racial hatred or concern about climate change that directly threatens them—that initially bring them together. However, this theory does not explain how the attitudes and characteristics of individuals who take some collective action differ from those who do not.

Emergent Norm Theory Unlike contagion and convergence theories, *emergent norm theory* emphasizes the importance of social norms in shaping crowd behavior. Drawing on the symbolic interactionist perspective, sociologists Ralph Turner and Lewis Killian (1993) assert that crowds develop their own definition of a situation and establish norms for behavior that fit the occasion. According to Turner and Killian, emergent norms occur when people define a new situation as highly unusual or see a long-standing situation in a new light. This may involve some redefinition of right and wrong in a situation that supplies the justification and coordinates the action in collective behavior.

Sociologists using the emergent norm approach seek to determine how individuals in a given collectivity develop an understanding of what is going on, how they construe these activities, and what type of norms are involved. For example, in a study of audience participation, sociologist Steven E. Clayman (1993) found that members of an audience listening to a speech applaud promptly and independently but wait to coordinate their booing with other people; they do not wish to "boo" alone.

Some emergent norms are permissive—that is, they give people a shared conviction that they may disregard ordinary rules, such as waiting in line, taking turns, or treating a speaker courteously. Collective activity such as mass looting may be defined (by participants) as taking what rightfully belongs to them. In the aftermath of the 2010 Haiti earthquake, when relief aid was slow in coming, looting was commonplace, but so too was "mob justice" for those who were caught stealing other people's possessions. In 2019, when certain areas of Dallas, Texas, experienced a series of tornadoes with winds up to 140 miles per hour, some looters decided to target a number of homes and businesses, stealing victims' construction equipment, gardening tools, various forms of technology, and other costly items. However, a new Texas law had just gone into effect that allowed for harsher punishments for crimes committed in disaster areas, so the Dallas County District Attorney's office announced that it planned to persecute looters to the full extent of the law (Jimenez, 2019).

Emergent norm theory points out that crowds are not irrational. Rather, new norms are developed in a rational way to fit the immediate situation. However, critics note that proponents of this perspective fail to specify exactly what constitutes a norm, how new ones emerge, and how they are so quickly disseminated and accepted by a wide variety of participants. One variation of this theory suggests

that no single dominant norm is accepted by everyone in a crowd; instead, norms are specific to the various categories of actors rather than to the collectivity as a whole.

Mass Behavior

Not all collective behavior takes place in face-to-face collectivities. **Mass behavior** is collective behavior that takes place when people (who are often geographically separated from one another) respond to the same event in much the same way. For people to respond in the same way, they typically have common sources of information that provoke their collective behavior. The most frequent types of mass behavior are rumors, gossip, mass hysteria, public opinion, fashions, and fads. Under some circumstances, social movements constitute a form of mass behavior. However, we examine social movements separately because they differ in some important ways from other types of dispersed collectivities.

Rumors and Gossip **Rumors** are unsubstantiated reports on an issue or a subject. Whereas a rumor may spread through an assembled collectivity, rumors may also be transmitted among people who are dispersed geographically, including people spreading rumors on Twitter, posting messages on Facebook, and texting or talking on the phone. Although rumors may initially contain a kernel of truth, they may be modified as they spread to serve the interests of those repeating them. Rumors thrive when tensions are high and when little authentic information is available on an issue of great concern.

Why do people believe rumors? People are often willing to give rumors credence when no opposing information is available. Once a rumor begins to circulate, it seldom stops unless compelling information comes to the forefront that either proves the rumor false or makes it obsolete. In contemporary societies with sophisticated technology, rumors come from a wide variety of sources and may be difficult to trace. Print media (newspapers and magazines) and electronic media (radio and television), cellular networks, satellite systems, the Internet, and social media aid the rapid movement of rumors around the globe. In addition, modern communications technology makes anonymity much easier. In a split second, messages (both factual and fictitious) can be disseminated to millions of people worldwide. As some analysts point out, rapid dissemination of information makes it difficult to separate fact from fiction and provides an opportunity for political leaders and everyday citizens alike to spread false claims, distortions, and lies without fear of being contradicted and proven to be completely false in their assertions. All it takes is for other people to forward social media messages on sites such as Twitter and immediately individuals worldwide may come to believe that fact is fiction and fiction is fact. This has frightening implications for democratic governments that thrive on free (but honest) speech.

Whereas rumors deal with an issue or a subject, **gossip** refers to rumors about the personal lives of individuals.

Charles Horton Cooley (1963/1909) viewed gossip as something that spread among a small group of individuals who personally knew the person who was the object of the rumor. Today, this is frequently not the case; many people enjoy gossiping about people whom they have never met. Tabloid newspapers and magazines, such as the *National Enquirer*, *People*, and *US Weekly*, along with television “news” programs, websites, Facebook, and Twitter, provide “inside” information on the lives of celebrities. We are constantly bombarded with information and gossip, much of which has not been checked for authenticity. In 2019, this situation became so bad for Meghan, Duchess of Sussex, and Prince Harry (Duke of Sussex) of the United Kingdom that they requested to be removed from their royal duties and sought to escape the 24/7 gossip mill that encompassed their lives by relocating part time to North America.

Mass Hysteria and Panic **Mass hysteria** is a form of dispersed collective behavior that occurs when a large number of people react with strong emotions and self-destructive behavior to a real or perceived threat. Does mass hysteria actually occur? Although the term has been widely used, many sociologists believe that this behavior is best described as a panic with a dispersed audience.

A classic example of mass hysteria or a panic with a widely dispersed audience was actor Orson Welles’s 1938 Halloween eve radio dramatization of H. G. Wells’s science fiction classic *The War of the Worlds*. A CBS radio dance-music program was interrupted suddenly by a news bulletin informing the audience that Martians had landed in New Jersey and were in the process of conquering Earth. Some listeners became extremely frightened even though an announcer had indicated before, during, and after the performance that the broadcast was a fictitious dramatization (■ Figure 16.4). According to some reports, as many as one million of the estimated 10 million listeners believed that this astonishing event had occurred. Thousands were reported to have hidden in their storm cellars or to have gotten in their cars so that they could flee from the Martians (see Brown, 1954). In actuality, the program probably did not generate mass hysteria, but rather a panic among gullible listeners. Others switched stations to determine if the same “news” was being broadcast elsewhere. When they discovered that it was not, they merely laughed at the joke being played on listeners by CBS. In 1988, on the fiftieth anniversary of the broadcast, a Portuguese radio station rebroadcast the program; once again, a panic ensued.

mass behavior

collective behavior that takes place when people (who are often geographically separated from one another) respond to the same event in much the same way.

rumor

an unsubstantiated report on an issue or a subject.

gossip

rumors about the personal lives of individuals.



AP Images

FIGURE 16.4 Although a spokesperson for CBS Radio stated to listeners that they were hearing a dramatization of a novel, the 1938 presentation of H. G. Wells's *The War of the Worlds*, as presented by Orson Welles and his Mercury Theatre, terrified untold numbers of people. Here Welles talks to interviewers the day after the event caused a nationwide panic.

Today, panics such as this tend to occur among segments of the population but not the entire population. For example, in 2013 some gun enthusiasts became concerned that there was going to be a shortage of ammunition and started purchasing all the bullets they could find because rumors abounded in the aftermath of the Newtown, Connecticut, school shootings that more stringent federal gun-control laws were going to be enacted. Some people could not be persuaded that guns and ammunition would still be available on store shelves when they wanted it for their weapons.

Fads and Fashions As you will recall from Chapter 2, a *fad* is a temporary but widely copied activity enthusiastically followed by large numbers of people. Fads can be embraced by widely dispersed collectivities: TV, the Internet, and social media bring the latest fads—such as top memes, YouTube videos of cats or dogs doing funny things, zombie films and TV series like *The Walking Dead*, and Ben & Jerry's latest ice cream flavor—to the attention of audiences around the world.

Unlike fads, fashions tend to be longer lasting. In Chapter 2, *fashion* is defined as a currently

valued style of behavior, thinking, or appearance. Fashion also applies to art, music, drama, literature, architecture, interior design, and automobiles, among other things. However, most sociological research on fashion has focused on clothing, especially women's apparel and how it may relate to culture and social customs in a specific era.

In preindustrial societies, clothing styles remained relatively unchanged. With the advent of industrialization, items of apparel became readily available at low prices because of mass production. Fashion became more important as people embraced the “modern” way of life and as advertising encouraged “conspicuous consumption.”

Georg Simmel, Thorstein Veblen, and Pierre Bourdieu have all viewed fashion as a means of status differentiation among members of different social classes. Simmel (1957/1904) suggested a classic “trickle-down” theory (although he did not use those exact words) to describe the process by which members of the lower classes emulate the fashions of the upper class (■ Figure 16.5). As the fashions descend through the status hierarchy, they are watered down and “vulgarized” so that they are no longer recognizable to members of the upper class, who then regard them as unfashionable and in bad taste (Davis, 1992). Veblen (1967/1899) asserted that fashion serves mainly to institutionalize conspicuous consumption among the wealthy. Many years later, Bourdieu (1984) similarly (but more subtly) suggested that “matters of taste,” including fashion sensibility, constitute a large share of the “cultural capital” possessed by members of the dominant class.

Herbert Blumer (1969) disagreed with the trickle-down approach, arguing that “collective selection” best explains fashion. Blumer suggested that people in the middle and



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FIGURE 16.5 Georg Simmel suggested a “trickle-down” theory to describe the process by which the lower classes emulate the fashions of the upper class. Do runway shows such as this one in Paris provide evidence for such a theory?

lower classes follow fashion because it is fashion, not because they desire to emulate members of the elite class. Blumer thus shifted the focus on fashion to collective mood, tastes, and choices: “Tastes are themselves a product of experience.... They are formed in the context of social interaction, responding to the definitions and affirmation given by others. People thrown into areas of common interaction and having similar runs of experience develop common tastes” (qtd. in Davis, 1992: 116). Perhaps one of the best refutations of the trickle-down approach is the way in which fashion today often originates among people in the lower social classes and is mimicked by the elites.

Public Opinion *Public opinion* consists of the attitudes and beliefs communicated by ordinary citizens to decision makers. It is measured through polls and surveys, which use research methods such as interviews and questionnaires, as described in Chapter 1. Many people are not interested in all aspects of public policy but are concerned about issues that they believe are relevant to them. Even on a single topic, public opinion will vary widely based on race/ethnicity, religion, region, social class, education level, gender, age, and so on.

Scholars who examine public opinion are interested in the extent to which the public’s attitudes are communicated to decision makers and the effect (if any) that public opinion has on policymaking. Some political scientists argue that public opinion has a substantial effect on decisions at all levels of government; others strongly disagree. ■ Table 16.1 shows a public opinion survey of the top seven problems and policy priorities of the U.S. public in March 2020.

The Gallup organization has tracked the views of people in this country since 1939, so researchers there have the ability to compare commonalities and differences in these problems and priorities using a longitudinal (over long periods of time) approach. As shown on Table 16.1, environment/pollution/climate change is one of the issues listed as an important problem facing the United States today, but it definitely is not listed near the top as most important. About 27 percent of respondents in this study listed as their top concern “Government/Poor leadership”

followed by “Diseases/Coronavirus” (13 percent) and “Healthcare” (11 percent). As you may notice, the poll totals only 75 percent, not 100 percent, because problems mentioned by less than 5 percent of U.S. adults in the survey are not included in this list. Of course, other pressing issues such as terrorism, the economy, jobs, education, Social Security, and the budget deficit are often on the minds of people when they are taking surveys such as this one.

Today, people attempt to influence elites, and vice versa. Consequently, a two-way process occurs with the dissemination of *propaganda*—information provided by individuals or groups that have a vested interest in furthering their own cause or damaging an opposing one. Although many of us think of propaganda in negative terms, the information provided may be correct and can have a positive effect on decision making. Of course, just the opposite is frequently the case, and people may make decisions based on faulty information. A divisive political argument erupted among government officials, members of the media, and the general public over whether such as things as “alternative facts” could actually exist. What do you think about this?

Grassroots environmental activists have attempted to influence public opinion for many years. However, it is less clear that public opinion translates into action by either decision makers in government and industry or by individuals (such as a willingness to adopt a more ecologically sound lifestyle to help reduce the effects of climate change).

Initially, most grassroots environmental activists attempt to influence public opinion so that local decision makers will feel the necessity of correcting a specific problem through changes in public policy. Although activists usually do not start out seeking broader social change, they often move in that direction when they become aware of how widespread the problem is in the larger society or on a global basis. One of two types of social movements often develops at this point—one focuses on NIMBY (“not in my backyard”), whereas the other focuses on NIABY (“not in anyone’s backyard”).

Social Movements

A *social movement* is an organized group that acts consciously to promote or resist change through collective action. Although collective behavior is short-lived and relatively unorganized, social movements are longer lasting, are more organized, and have specific goals. Because

TABLE 16.1 Top Seven Problems and Policy Priorities of the U.S. Public, March 2020

Issue	Percentage
The government/Poor leadership	27
Diseases/Coronavirus	13
Healthcare	11
Immigration	8
Unifying the country	6
Economy in general	5
Environment/Pollution/Climate change	5

Source: Gallup, 2020.

public opinion

the attitudes and beliefs communicated by ordinary citizens to decision makers.

propaganda

information provided by individuals or groups that have a vested interest in furthering their own cause or damaging an opposing one.

social movement

an organized group that acts consciously to promote or resist change through collective action.

social movements initially are not institutionalized and are outside the political mainstream, they offer “outsiders” an opportunity to have their voices heard.

Social movements are more likely to develop in industrialized societies than in preindustrial societies, where acceptance of traditional beliefs and practices makes such movements unlikely. Diversity and a lack of consensus (hallmarks of industrialized nations) contribute to demands for social change, and people who participate in social movements typically lack the power and other resources to bring about change without engaging in collective action. Social movements are most likely to spring up when people come to see their personal troubles as public issues that cannot be solved without a collective response. Although the government is most frequently the target of social movement activity, other organizations—such as schools, corporations, or financial institutions—are also the targets of social activism.

Social movements make democracy more available to excluded groups. Historically, people in the United States have worked at the grassroots level to bring about changes even when elites sought to discourage activism. For example, the civil rights movement brought into its ranks African Americans in the South who had never before been allowed to participate in politics. The women’s suffrage movement gave voice to women who had been denied the right to vote. Similarly, a grassroots environmental movement gave the working-class residents of Love Canal a way to “fight city hall” and the chemical company. Most social movements rely on volunteers to carry out the work. Traditionally, women have been strongly represented in both the membership and the leadership of many grassroots movements.

Other movements have grappled with issues that sociologist Kai Erikson (1994) referred to as a “new species of trouble”—environmental problems that contaminate, pollute, befoul, taint, and scare human beings in new ways that produce uncanny fear (Erikson, 1991). The chaos that Erikson describes is the result of technological disasters caused by system failures, human error, faulty designs, and other problems that wreak havoc on people and things. Unfortunately, in the twenty-first century, we typically do not think of these as a “new species of trouble” because we are seeing the effects of these grave problems on a regular basis not only in the United States but worldwide.

Social movements provide the chance to enter the game of politics to people who otherwise would not have the resources to do so. We are most familiar with those movements that develop around public policy issues considered newsworthy by the media, ranging from abortion and women’s rights to gun control, climate change, and environmental justice. However, a number of other types of social movements exist as well.

Types of Social Movements

Social movements are difficult to classify; however, sociologists distinguish among movements on the basis of their

goals and the *amount of change* they seek to produce. Some movements seek to change people, whereas others seek to change society.

Reform Movements Grassroots environmental movements are an example of *reform movements*, which seek to improve society by changing some specific aspect of the social structure. Members of reform movements usually work within the existing system to attempt to change public policy so that it more adequately reflects their own value system. Examples of reform movements (in addition to the environmental movement) include labor movements, animal rights movements, antinuclear movements, Mothers against Drunk Driving, and the disability rights movement.

Some social movements arise specifically to alter negative stereotypes and reduce stigma associated with specific categories of people (■ Figure 16.6). Such social movements may not only bring about changes in societal attitudes and practices but also produce changes in participants’ social emotions. For example, the civil rights and gay rights movements helped replace shame with pride.

Revolutionary Movements Movements seeking to bring about a total change in society are referred to as *revolutionary movements*. These movements usually do not attempt to work within the existing system; rather, they aim to remake the system by replacing existing institutions with new ones. This was apparently the original goal of the Occupy Movement, which started as Occupy Wall Street in 2011. The goal of this movement at both the local and international levels was to protest social and economic inequality and advocate change in how societies are organized and resources distributed. The movement emphasized reducing corporate greed and restructuring the global financial system. However, although the Occupy Movement introduced new language such as “the 1 percent”



Robert Abbott Sengstacke/Archive Photos/Getty Images

FIGURE 16.6 Martin Luther King, Jr., a leader of the civil rights movement in the 1950s and 1960s, advocated nonviolent protests that sometimes took the form of civil disobedience. Here he marches alongside his wife, Coretta Scott King, who for many years took over Dr. King's activities after he was assassinated.

and “the 99 percent,” it did not reach the impact of a major revolutionary movement. But some social analysts believe that this movement will bring about major changes in how presidential elections are run, in higher minimum wages, and in the U.S.-based environmental movement. After the Occupy Movement, environmental activists became highly visible as they protested the Keystone XL pipeline being constructed between the United States and Canada. Similarly, college students led the divestment movement to eliminate fossil fuel assets from university investment funds (Levitin, 2015). Today, the youth climate activists discussed in this chapter have staged climate strikes outside corporate headquarters of organizations accused of harming the environment and contributing to global warming. They have also founded local, state, national, and international organizations to organize protests and keep their concerns in front of public and political leaders.

Revolutionary movements range from utopian groups seeking to establish an ideal society to radical terrorists who use fear tactics to intimidate those with whom they disagree ideologically. In the twenty-first century, people in Muslim countries around the world, including Tunisia, Egypt, and Turkey, have participated in revolutionary movements, such as the Arab Spring in 2011, and risen up against what they perceived to be tyrannical regimes (■ Figure 16.7). Similarly, many people in Tunisia gathered in 2013 to call for unity and support for the resistance movement against tyranny and injustices perpetrated by the former regime of Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, the ousted president of that nation who had banned all public meetings and engaged in other forms of oppression.

Movements based on terrorism often use tactics such as bombings, kidnappings, hostage-taking, hijackings, and assassinations. A number of movements in the United States have engaged in terrorist activities or supported a policy of violence. However, the terrorist attacks in New York City and Washington, D.C., on September 11, 2001, and the events that followed those attacks proved to all of us that

terrorism within this country can originate from the activities of revolutionary terrorists from outside the country as well. Some terrorist events—such as the Boston Marathon bombing in 2013—do not appear to be as fully organized or to include as many people as revolutionary movements are typically thought to involve.

It is difficult to know where to place international movements such as ISIS, the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria, which claims to follow an Islamic fundamentalist doctrine of Sunni Islam. Using the name “Islamic State,” this group has claimed that it has authority over all Muslims worldwide, and it has taken control over vast territories in the Middle East as well as other parts of the world. This movement has been extremely violent, including posting on social media videos of beheadings of both soldiers and civilians, and engaging in human rights abuses and the destruction of ancient historical and religious relics in a number of countries. According to the United Nations and the European Union, this group is officially a terrorist movement determined to establish a Sunni Islamic state, and ISIS (also known as ISIL, for the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant) is a threat to the rest of the world with its attacks on other nations, including the deadly November 2015 Paris attacks, followed soon thereafter by bombings in Brussels, Belgium. In sum, ISIS, or ISIL, is a movement, but it defies simple description based on existing political, religious, and sociological parameters for identifying categories of social movements. In October 2019, the Trump administration claimed responsibility for the death of Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, the leader of ISIS, and it is impossible in early 2020 to predict the future of this revolutionary movement. We do know that deaths from terrorism were reduced by one-half between 2015 and 2019, but it is also known that the number of countries affected by terrorism is growing (Institute for Economics and Peace, 2019). Of particular concern is the fact that political terrorism has been rising in recent years for North America, Western Europe, and Oceania, where individuals and small groups of people, more than organized terrorist organizations or revolutionary movements, have claimed responsibility for attacks. All of this makes it more difficult to determine the source, ideology, and possible solutions for violent revolutionary behavior.

Religious Movements Social movements that seek to produce radical change in individuals are typically based on spiritual or supernatural belief systems. Also referred to as *expressive movements*, *religious movements* are concerned with reforming or renewing people through “inner change.” Fundamentalist religious groups seeking to convert nonbelievers to their belief system are an example of this type of movement. Some religious movements are *millenarian*—that is, they forecast that “the end is near” and assert that an immediate change in behavior is imperative. Examples include Hare Krishnas, the Unification church, Scientology, and the Divine Light Mission, all of which tend to appeal to the psychological and social needs of young



FIGURE 16.7 Revolutionary movements have taken place in Egypt and other Arab nations in recent years because of a strong belief that leaders are oppressive and governments are not benefiting the people.

people seeking meaning in life that mainstream religions have not provided for them.

According to some social analysts, the newest religious movement is no religion at all. Atheists and agnostics have been expanding and diversifying their ranks, and more people are identifying themselves as “nones” on surveys than in the past. Although individuals with some of these beliefs are not a part of any religious movement, others form organizations where they can meet with others who are united by a common belief that they do not believe in God or that they have no religious affiliation. Some of the nonbelievers now participate in web forums and social media groups where they can talk about their ideas and beliefs without being a part of a movement or a formal religious body. For more information on “nones,” atheists, agnostics, and similar categories of nonbelievers, search the Pew Research Center website (pewresearchcenter.org) for studies on this topic.

Alternative Movements Movements that seek limited change in some aspect of people’s behavior are referred to as *alternative movements*. For example, early in the twentieth century the Women’s Christian Temperance Union attempted to get people to abstain from drinking alcoholic beverages. Some analysts place “therapeutic social movements” such as Alcoholics Anonymous in this category; however, others do not because of their belief that people must change their lives completely in order to overcome alcohol abuse. More recently, a variety of “New Age” movements have directed people’s behavior by emphasizing spiritual consciousness combined with a belief in reincarnation and astrology. Such practices as vegetarianism, meditation, and holistic medicine are often included in the self-improvement category. Some alternative movements have included the practice of yoga (usually without its traditional background in the Hindu religion) as a means by which the self can be liberated and union can be achieved with the supreme spirit or universal soul.

Resistance Movements Also referred to as *regressive movements*, *resistance movements* seek to prevent change or to undo change that has already occurred. Virtually all of the social movements previously discussed face resistance from one or more reactive movements that hold opposing viewpoints and want to foster public policies that reflect their own beliefs. Examples of resistance movements are groups organized to oppose same-sex marriage, abortion, and gun-control legislation.

Stages in Social Movements

Do all social movements go through similar stages? Not necessarily, but there appear to be identifiable stages in virtually all movements that are able to succeed beyond their initial phase of development (see ■ Figure 16.8).

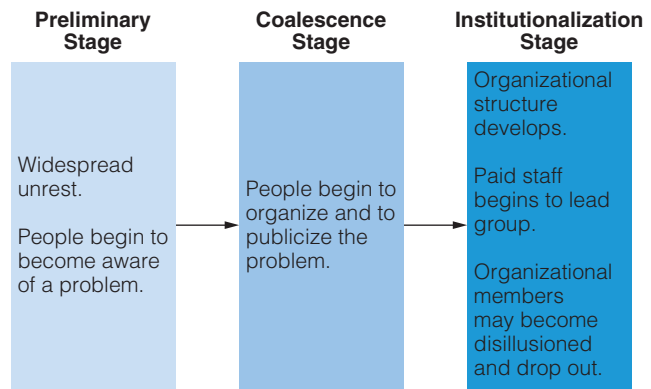


FIGURE 16.8 Stages in Social Movements

In the *preliminary* (or *incipiency*) stage, widespread unrest is present as people begin to become aware of a problem. At this stage, leaders emerge to agitate others into taking action. In the *coalescence* stage, people begin to organize and to publicize the problem. At this stage, some movements become formally organized at local and regional levels. In the *institutionalization* (or *bureaucratization*) stage, an organizational structure develops and a paid staff (rather than volunteers) begins to lead the group. When the movement reaches this stage, the initial zeal and idealism of members may diminish as administrators take over management of the organization. Early grassroots supporters may become disillusioned and drop out; they may also start another movement to address some as-yet-unsolved aspect of the original problem. For example, some national environmental organizations—such as the Sierra Club, the National Audubon Society, and the National Parks and Conservation Association—that started as grassroots conservation movements are currently viewed by many people as being unresponsive to local environmental problems. As a result, new movements have arisen, such as the Go Green Movement, to reduce problems in the environment and the economy.

Social Movement Theories

What conditions are most likely to produce social movements? Why are people drawn to these movements? Sociologists have developed several theories to answer these questions.

Relative Deprivation Theory

According to *relative deprivation theory*, people who are satisfied with their present condition are less likely to seek social change. Social movements arise as a response to people’s perception that they have been deprived of what they consider to be their fair share. Thus, people who suffer relative deprivation are more likely to feel that change is necessary and to join a social movement in order to bring about that

change. *Relative deprivation* refers to the discontent that people may feel when they compare their achievements with those of similarly situated persons and find that they have less than they think they deserve. Karl Marx captured the idea of relative deprivation in this description: “A house may be large or small; as long as the surrounding houses are small it satisfies all social demands for a dwelling. But let a palace arise beside the little house, and it shrinks from a little house to a hut” (qtd. in Ladd, 1966: 24). Movements based on relative deprivation are most likely to occur when an upswing in the standard of living is followed by a period of decline, such that people have *unfulfilled rising expectations*—newly raised hopes of a better lifestyle that are not fulfilled as rapidly as the people expected or are not realized at all.

Although most of us can relate to relative deprivation theory, it does not fully account for why people experience social discontent but fail to join a social movement. Even though discontent and feelings of deprivation may be necessary to produce certain types of social movements, they are not sufficient to bring movements into existence.

Value-Added Theory

The *value-added theory* developed by sociologist Neil Smelser (1963) is based on the assumption that certain conditions are necessary for the development of a social movement. Smelser called his theory the “value-added” approach based on the concept (borrowed from the field of economics) that each step in the production process adds something to the finished product. For example, in the process of converting iron ore into automobiles, each stage “adds value” to the final product (Smelser, 1963). Similarly, Smelser asserted, six conditions are necessary and sufficient to produce social movements when they combine or interact in a particular situation:

- *Structural conduciveness.* People must become aware of a significant problem and have the opportunity to engage in collective action. According to Smelser, movements are more likely to occur when a person, class, or agency can be singled out as the source of the problem; when channels for expressing grievances either are not available or fail; and when the aggrieved have a chance to communicate among themselves.
- *Structural strain.* When a society or community is unable to meet people’s expectations that something should be done about a problem, strain occurs in the system. The ensuing tension and conflict contribute to the development of a social movement based on people’s belief that the problem would not exist if authorities had done what they were supposed to do.
- *Spread of a generalized belief.* For a movement to develop, there must be a clear statement of the problem and a shared view of its cause, effects, and possible solution.
- *Precipitating factors.* To reinforce the existing generalized belief, an inciting incident or dramatic

event must occur. With regard to technological disasters, some gradually emerge from a long-standing environmental threat, whereas others (including the meltdown of a nuclear power plant) involve a suddenly imposed problem.

- *Mobilization for action.* At this stage, leaders emerge to organize others and give them a sense of direction.
- *Social control factors.* If there is a high level of social control on the part of law enforcement officials, political leaders, and others, it becomes more difficult to develop a social movement or engage in certain types of collective action.

Value-added theory takes into account the complexity of social movements and makes it possible to test Smelser’s assertions regarding the necessary and sufficient conditions that produce such movements. However, critics note that the approach is rooted in the functionalist tradition and views structural strains as disruptive to society.

Resource Mobilization Theory

Smelser’s value-added theory tends to underemphasize the importance of resources in social movements. By contrast, *resource mobilization theory* focuses on the ability of members of a social movement to acquire resources and mobilize people in order to advance their cause. Resources include money, people’s time and skills, access to the media, and material goods such as property and equipment. Assistance from outsiders is essential for social movements. For example, reform movements are more likely to succeed when they gain the support of political and economic elites.

Resource mobilization theory is based on the assumption that participants in social movements are rational people. From this perspective, social movements are formed and dissolved, mobilized and deactivated, based on rational decisions about the goals of the group, available resources, and the cost of mobilization and collective action. Resource mobilization theory also assumes that participants must have some degree of economic and political resources to make the movement a success. In other words, widespread discontent alone cannot produce a social movement; adequate resources and motivated people are essential to any concerted social action.

In the twenty-first century, scholars continue to modify resource mobilization theory and to develop new approaches for investigating the diversity of movements. Emerging perspectives based on resource mobilization theory emphasize the ideology and legitimacy of movements as well as material resources.

Additional perspectives are also needed on social movements in other nations to determine how activists in those countries acquire resources and mobilize people to advance such causes as environmental protection and cleaning up pollution (see this chapter’s “Sociology in Global Perspective” box).

Social Constructionist Theory: Frame Analysis

Theories based on a symbolic interactionist perspective focus on the importance of the symbolic presentation of a problem to both participants and the general public. *Social constructionist theory* is based on the assumption that a social movement is an interactive, symbolically defined, and negotiated process that involves participants, opponents, and bystanders.

Research based on this perspective often investigates how problems are framed and what names they are given (see ■ Figure 16.9). This approach reflects the influence of sociologist Erving Goffman's *Frame Analysis* (1974), in which he suggests that our interpretation of the particulars of events and activities is dependent on the framework from which we perceive them. According to Goffman, the purpose of frame analysis is "to try to isolate some of the basic frameworks of understanding available in our society for making sense out

of events and to analyze the special vulnerabilities to which these frames of reference are subject" (10). In other words, various "realities" may be simultaneously occurring among participants engaged in the same set of activities. When people come together in a social movement, they assign meanings to their activities in such a way that they build a framework for interacting and socially constructing their grievances so that they can more effectively voice them and know what resolution they want for these issues.

Sociologists have identified at least three ways in which grievances are framed. First, *diagnostic framing* identifies a problem and attributes blame or causality to some group or entity so that the social movement has a target for its actions. Second, *prognostic framing* pinpoints possible solutions or remedies, based on the target previously identified. Third, *motivational framing* provides a vocabulary of motives that compel people to take action. When successful framing occurs, the individual's vague dissatisfactions are turned into well-defined grievances, and people are compelled to join the movement in an effort to reduce or eliminate those grievances.

Beyond motivational framing, additional frame alignment processes are necessary in order to supply a continuing sense of urgency to the movement. *Frame alignment* is the linking-together of interpretive orientations of individuals and social movement organizations so that there is congruence between individuals' interests, beliefs, and values and the movement's ideologies, goals, and activities. Four distinct frame-alignment processes occur in social movements:

1. *Frame bridging* is the process by which movement organizations reach individuals who already share the same worldview as the organization.
2. *Frame amplification* occurs when movements appeal to deeply held values and beliefs in the general population and link those to movement issues so that people's preexisting value commitments serve as a "hook" that can be used to recruit them.
3. *Frame extension* occurs when movements enlarge the boundaries of an initial frame to incorporate other issues that appear to be of importance to potential participants.
4. *Frame transformation* refers to the process whereby the creation and maintenance of new values, beliefs, and meanings induce movement participation by redefining activities and events in such a manner that people believe they must become involved in collective action.

Some or all of these frame-alignment processes are used by social movements as they seek to define grievances and recruit participants.

Frame analysis provides new insights on how social movements emerge and grow when people are faced with problems such as technological disasters, about which



FIGURE 16.9 How is the issue of immigration framed in these photos? Research based on frame analysis often investigates how social issues are framed and what names they are given.

SOCIOLOGY IN **Global Perspective**

Change Does Occur: Activist Cleans Up Environmental Pollution at Some Chinese Factories

- 2012: Apple announced it would allow independent environmental reviews of factories that supply parts for Apple products. Apple had faced rising criticism about toxic pollution and factory injuries of workers in suppliers' factories in China and other countries. Among the environmental problems cited were hazardous-waste leaks and the use of toxic chemicals that might create health risks not only for workers but also for neighboring communities (Chu, 2012).
- 2020: Activist and the Institute of Public and Environmental Affairs (IPE) patiently pursues goal of cleaning up Chinese factories and has succeeded in cases such as Apple and Catcher, their supplier of parts. When Ma Jun and IPE returned to Apple's factories and its suppliers in China, they found that massive black tanks and large sheds now contain vats and pipes where the companies dispose of the toxic chromium waste produced in manufacturing parts for iPhones, iPads, and MacBooks. IPE was also able to bring about environmental changes at Panasonic, Dell, and other high-tech companies currently operating in China.

For many years, environmental problems in China have been in the news around the world. Online groups and social media sites have intensified and greatly sped up this coverage and made environmental activists worldwide



Imagine China/Newscom

Companies that supply parts for Apple products have been a major source of toxic pollution and factory injuries in China. Apple has agreed to require companies in their supply chain to improve environmental standards in plants such as the one where this employee inspects glass cover-plates for the Apple iPhone X.

more aware of the problems faced by people in that rapidly growing region of the world. For example, cancer is the leading cause of death in China, partly because of air pollution, water pollution, and other environmental contaminants, some of which have been attributed to factories that produce goods for high-income nations such as the United States.

What is being done about this situation? Some social protesters and social movements are beginning to see a payoff in various provinces of China. Although initial meetings between Apple and Ma Jun's organization were very confrontational, these encounters ultimately paid off for the benefit of the environment and people living in the area. Ma was able to convince the Community Party that the nation will have greater social stability if it reduces toxic pollution and improves environmental quality at these corporate sites. Issues such as these are important to government officials in China because they want to encourage economic development and prosperity. For this reason, environmental activism may be more highly accepted by political leaders than some other forms of advocacy (Ford, 2019; updated 2020).

What will the future hold for environmental protection in China? According to resource mobilization theory, widespread discontent alone cannot produce a social movement: Adequate resources and motivated people like Ma Jun are essential for any concerted social action. Some analysts believe that environmental leaders will be able to mobilize people for change because smartphones, the Internet, and social media make it possible for people to organize quickly and demand governmental intervention regarding pressing problems. If companies such as Apple become an active force in requiring environmental reviews of their own factories and their suppliers, this action might increase pressure for improvement by other Chinese suppliers and businesses. Even if this is just the tip of the iceberg, it is a start because many transnational companies currently have contract plants in China.

Reflect & Analyze

Do you believe that U.S. companies can play a role in environmental movements in China? Should corporations also be concerned about environmental issues in the United States? Why or why not?

greater ambiguity typically exists, and when people are attempting to “name” the problems associated with things such as nuclear or chemical contamination. However, frame analysis has been criticized for its “ideational biases” (McAdam, 1996). According to sociologist Doug McAdam (1996), frame analyses of social movements have looked almost exclusively at ideas and their formal expression, whereas little attention has been paid to other significant factors, such as movement tactics, mobilizing structures, and changing political opportunities that influence the signifying work of movements. In this context, *political opportunity* means government structure, public policy, and political conditions that set the boundaries for change and political action. These boundaries are crucial variables in explaining why various social movements have different outcomes.

Political Opportunity Theory

Why do social protests occur? According to political opportunity theorists, the origins of social protests cannot be explained solely by the fact that people possess a variety of grievances or that they have resources available for mobilization. Instead, social protests are directly related to the political opportunities that potential protesters and movement organizers believe exist within the political system at any given point in time. Political opportunity theory is based on the assumption that social protests that take place *outside* of mainstream political institutions are deeply intertwined with more conventional political activities that take place *inside* these institutions. As used in this context, *opportunity* refers to “options for collective action, with chances and risks attached to them that depend on factors outside the mobilizing group” (Koopmans, 1999: 97). *Political opportunity theory* states that people will choose those options for collective action that are most readily available to them and those options that will produce the most favorable outcome for their cause.

What are some specific applications of political action theory? Urban sociologists and social movement analysts have found that those cities that provided opportunities for people’s protests to be heard within urban governments were less likely to have extensive protests or riots in their communities because aggrieved people could use more conventional means to make their claims known. By contrast, urban riots were more likely to occur when activists believed that all conventional routes to protest were blocked. Changes in demography, migration, and the political economy in the United States (factors that were seemingly external to the civil rights movement) all contributed to a belief on the part of African Americans in the late 1960s and early 1970s that they could organize collective action and that their claims regarding the need for racial justice might be more readily heard by government officials.

Political opportunity theory has grown in popularity among sociologists who study social movements because this approach highlights the interplay of opportunity, mobilization, and political influence in determining when

certain types of behavior may occur. However, like other perspectives, this theory has certain limitations, including the fact that social movement organizations may not always be completely distinct from, or external to, the existing political system. For example, it was difficult to classify the Tea Party movement, which emerged in the aftermath of the election of President Barack Obama. In the 2016 presidential election, candidate Ted Cruz, Republican senator from Texas, continued to align himself with the Tea Party’s roots and its conservative values until he was unable to continue in his quest for the U.S. presidency because he lacked sufficient numbers of delegates in primary contests to win the Republican nomination. By 2019, journalists were suggesting that, although the Tea Party did not get what it wanted in terms of previous elections, the organization was instrumental in bringing about the “politics of anger,” which has continued to permeate the 2020 presidential election. Although many of the ideas that the Tea Party movement set forth were largely abandoned by the Trump administration and Republicans, the movement did encourage a politics of outrage and mistrust in the government that has thrived in the ensuing years (Peters, 2019).

In political movements, social activists typically *create* their own opportunities rather than wait for them to emerge, and activists are often political entrepreneurs in their own right, much like the state and federal legislators and other governmental officials whom they seek to influence on behalf of their social cause. Political opportunity theory calls our attention to how important the degree of openness of a political system is to the goals and tactics of persons who organize social movements.

New Social Movement Theory

New social movement theory looks at a diverse array of collective actions and the manner in which those actions are based on politics, ideology, and culture. It also incorporates factors of identity, including race, class, gender, and sexuality, as sources of collective action and social movements. Examples of “new social movements” include ecofeminism, environmental justice movements, and climate change advocates.

Ecofeminism emerged in the late 1970s and early 1980s out of the feminist, peace, and ecology movements. Prompted by the near-meltdown at the Three Mile Island nuclear power plant, ecofeminists established World Women in Defense of the Environment. *Ecofeminism* is based on the belief that patriarchy is a root cause of environmental problems. According to ecofeminists, patriarchy not only results in the domination of women by men but also contributes to a belief that nature is to be possessed and dominated, rather than treated as a partner.

Another “new social movement” focuses on environmental justice and the intersection of race and class in the environmental struggle. Sociologist Stella M. Capek (1993) investigated a contaminated landfill in the



Giles Clarke/Getty Images News/Getty Images

FIGURE 16.10 Referred to as “Cancer Alley,” this area of Baton Rouge, Louisiana, is home to a predominantly African American population and also has many refineries that heavily pollute the region. Sociologists suggest that environmental racism is a significant problem in the United States and other nations. What do you think?

Carver Terrace neighborhood of Texarkana, Texas, and found that residents were able to mobilize for change and win a federal buyout and relocation by symbolically linking their issue to a larger *environmental justice* framework. Since the 1980s, the emerging environmental justice movement has focused on the issue of *environmental racism*—the belief that a disproportionate number of hazardous facilities (including industries such as waste disposal/treatment and chemical plants) are placed in low-income areas populated primarily by people of color (Bullard and Wright, 1992). (See ■ Figure 16.10). These areas have been left out of most of the environmental cleanup that has taken place. Capek concludes that linking Carver Terrace with environmental justice led to it being designated as a cleanup site. She also views this as an important turning point in new social movements: “Carver Terrace is significant not only as a federal buyout and relocation of a minority community, but also as a marker of the emergence of environmental racism as a major new component of environmental social movements in the United States” (21). We have discussed climate change activism throughout this chapter, and it has become somewhat the successor to environmental

social movements in some areas of the world where global warming issues and similar problems are no longer a topic for debate. They are a daily reality in the lives of millions of people.

Sociologist Steven M. Buechler (2000: 11) has argued that theories pertaining to twenty-first-century social movements should be oriented toward the structural, macrolevel contexts in which movements arise. These theories should incorporate both political and cultural dimensions of social activism:

Social movements are historical products of the age of modernity. They arose as part of a sweeping social, political, and intellectual change that led a significant number of people to view society as a social construction that was susceptible to social reconstruction through concerted collective effort.

environmental racism

the belief that a disproportionate number of hazardous facilities (including industries such as waste disposal/treatment and chemical plants) are placed in low-income areas populated primarily by people of color.

CONCEPT Quick Review

Social Movement Theories

	Key Components
Relative Deprivation	People who are discontent when they compare their achievements with those of others consider themselves relatively deprived and join social movements in order to get what they view as their “fair share,” especially when there is an upswing in the economy followed by a decline.
Value-Added	Certain conditions are necessary for a social movement to develop: (1) structural conduciveness, such that people are aware of a problem and have the opportunity to engage in collective action; (2) structural strain, such that society or the community cannot meet people's expectations for taking care of the problem; (3) growth and spread of a generalized belief about causes and effects of and possible solutions to the problem; (4) precipitating factors, or events that reinforce the beliefs; (5) mobilization of participants for action; and (6) social control factors, such that society comes to allow the movement to take action.
Resource Mobilization	A variety of resources (money, members, access to media, and material goods such as equipment) are necessary for a social movement; people participate only when they believe that the movement has access to these resources.
Social Constructionist Theory: Frame Analysis	Based on the assumption that social movements are an interactive, symbolically defined, and negotiated process involving participants, opponents, and bystanders, frame analysis is used to determine how people assign meaning to activities and processes in social movements.
Political Opportunity	People will choose the options for collective action (i.e., “opportunities”) that are most readily available to them and those options that will produce the most favorable outcome for their cause.
New Social Movement	The focus is on sources of social movements, including politics, ideology, and culture. Race, class, gender, sexuality, and other sources of identity are also factors in movements such as ecofeminism and environmental justice.

Thus, from their inception, social movements have had a dual focus. Reflecting the political, they have always involved some form of challenge to prevailing forms of authority. Reflecting the cultural, they have always operated as symbolic laboratories in which reflexive actors pose questions of meaning, purpose, identity, and change.

As we have seen, social movements may be an important source of social change, both for good and for ill. Throughout this text we have examined a variety of social problems that have been the focus of one or more social movements. For this reason, many groups focus on preserving their gains while simultaneously fighting for changes that they believe are still necessary. This chapter's Concept Quick Review summarizes the main theories of social movements.

Looking Ahead: Social Change in the Future

In this chapter we have focused on collective behavior and social movements as potential forces for social change in contemporary societies. For example, environmental problems like Love Canal in Niagara Falls and the Carver Terrace disaster in Texarkana produced social movements

that were, to a large extent, responsible for passage of the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act, which led to the formation of the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry. Massive oil spills in the Gulf of Mexico and various oceans, as well as the collective behavior that followed these disasters, were responsible for new legislation and guidelines for offshore drilling and emergency preparedness by corporations and the federal government. Will current inequality-based protests such as climate change activism generate long-term effects in our society? It is too soon to tell because a number of other factors, often out of our control, also contribute to social change, including the physical environment, population trends, technological development, and social institutions.

The Physical Environment and Change

Changes in the physical environment often produce changes in the lives of people (■ Figure 16.11). In turn, people can make dramatic changes in the physical environment, over which we have only limited control. Throughout history, natural disasters have taken their toll on individuals and societies. Major natural disasters—including tsunamis/hurricanes, floods, tornadoes, and earthquakes—can devastate an entire population. In the twenty-first century, earthquakes have affected India, Pakistan, El Salvador, Iran,



FIGURE 16.11 Destruction of the physical environment often produces dramatic fluctuations in the lives of people, a factor that can contribute to larger social change. What changes might natural disasters such as Hurricane Sandy bring about?

China, Italy, Haiti, Chile, New Zealand, Japan, Nepal, and the United States, among other nations. Hurricanes, tsunamis, floods, and tornadoes have devastated portions of Pakistan, Australia, and the United States. Even comparatively “small” natural disasters change the lives of many people. As sociologist Kai Erikson (1976, 1994) suggested, the trauma that people experience from disasters may outweigh the actual loss of physical property—memories of such events can haunt people for many years.

Some natural disasters are exacerbated by human decisions. For example, floods are viewed as natural disasters, but excessive development may contribute to a flood’s severity. As office buildings, shopping malls, industrial plants, residential areas, and highways are developed, less land remains as groundcover to absorb rainfall. When heavier-than-usual rains occur, flooding becomes inevitable; some regions then have excessive water on the streets for days or even weeks after hurricanes and flooding. Clearly, humans cannot control the rain, but human decisions can worsen the consequences. If the first wave of a disaster is the storm itself, the second wave is a *human-made disaster* that results partly from decisions related to planning and budgetary priorities, allocation of funds for maintaining infrastructure, and the importance of emergency preparedness.

Infrastructure refers to a framework of systems, such as transportation and utilities, that makes it possible to have specific land uses (commercial, residential, and recreational, for example) and a built environment (buildings, houses, and highways) that support people’s daily activities and the nation’s economy. It takes money and commitment to make sure that the components of the infrastructure

remain strong so that cities can withstand natural disasters and other concerns such as climate change. For example, consider that the city of Chicago has taken a proactive stance on dealing with future increases in temperature and climate conditions that will make Chicago’s weather feel more like Baton Rouge, Louisiana, than a northern city. To cope with this change, Chicago city officials are already repaving alleyways with water-permeable materials and planting swamp oak and sweet gum trees from the South rather than the more indigenous white oak, which is the state tree of Illinois (Kaufman, 2011).

In 2020, New York City officials, wanting to protect the city from floodwaters like those in the aftermath of Hurricane Sandy that caused billions of dollars in damage, began discussions about building a \$119 billion sea wall. This wall would be in the form of man-made islands with retractable gates that would stretch from a section of the borough of Queens to a strip of land in New Jersey. In early 2020, the pros and cons of the efficacy of these sea gates as a means of saving areas of New York City from another disaster are a topic of much discussion but officials are far from determining the practicality of such an endeavor. Of great concern to many critics of the barrier was the fact that many other problems brought about by climate change would not be addressed by this “solution” at all (Barnard, 2020).

Long-range planning such as this to cope with changes in the physical environment may seem far-fetched, but when the time comes, between fifty and one hundred years from now, such endeavors may seem farsighted instead. In the words of one Chicago city official, “Cities adapt or they go away” (qtd. in Kaufman, 2011).

The changing environment is one of many reasons why experts are also concerned about availability of water in the future. Water is a finite resource that is necessary for both human survival and the production of goods. However, water is being wasted and polluted, and the supply of *potable* (drinkable) water is limited. People are causing—or at least contributing to—that problem.

People also contribute to changes in the earth’s physical condition. Through soil erosion and other degradation of grazing land, often at the hands of people, more than 25 billion tons of topsoil are lost annually. As people clear forests to create farmland and pastures and to acquire lumber and firewood, the earth’s tree cover continues to diminish. As millions of people drive motor vehicles, the amount of carbon dioxide in the environment continues to rise each year, contributing to global warming.

Just as people contribute to changes in the physical environment, human activities must also be adapted to changes in the environment. For example, we are being warned to stay out of the sunlight because of increases in ultraviolet rays, a cause of skin cancer, as a result of the accelerating depletion of the ozone layer. If the ozone warnings are accurate, the change in the physical environment will dramatically affect those who work or spend their leisure time outside.

Population and Change

Changes in population size, distribution, and composition affect the culture and social structure of a society and change the relationships among nations. As discussed in Chapter 15, the countries experiencing the most rapid increases in population have a less developed infrastructure to deal with those changes. How will nations of the world deal with population growth as the global population continues to move toward eight billion? Only time will provide a response to this question.

In the United States a shift in population distribution from central cities to suburban and exurban areas has produced other dramatic changes. In some areas, central cities have experienced a shrinking tax base as middle-income and upper-middle-income residents and businesses have moved to suburban and outlying areas. In other areas, the largest metropolitan areas have become enclaves for the wealthiest transnational residents who can afford to own homes in many of the world's most expensive cities. Likewise, some suburban areas thrive with McMansion-style residential properties and security-gated communities, while other suburbs have rundown housing, high rates of poverty, and problems similar to those of the less fortunate central cities, including decaying infrastructure, low-performing schools, inadequate transportation, and rising crime rates, to name only a few concerns. The changing composition of the U.S. population has resulted in children from more diverse cultural backgrounds entering school, producing a demand for new programs and changes in curricula. An increase in the number of single mothers and of women employed outside the household has created a need for more childcare; an increase in the older population has created a greater need for services such as medical care and placed more stress on programs such as Social Security. Population growth will affect many regions of the country and intensify existing social problems.

Technology and Change

Technology is an important force for change; in some ways, technological development has made our lives much easier. Advances in communication and transportation have made instantaneous worldwide communication possible but have also brought old belief systems and the status quo into question as never before. Today, we are increasingly moving information instead of people—and doing it instantly. Advances in science and medicine have made significant changes in people's lives in high-income countries.

Scientific advances will continue to affect our lives, from the foods we eat to our reproductive capabilities. Biotechnology is the process by which organisms or their components, such as enzymes, are used

to make products such as yogurt, cheese, beer, and wine. Genetically modified products today include medicines and vaccines, as well as foods and food ingredients. Of course, these new technologies are not without controversy; they pose some risks (genomics.energy.gov, 2012). Advances in medicine have made it possible for those formerly unable to have children to procreate; women well beyond menopause are now able to become pregnant with the assistance of medical technology (■ Figure 16.12). Advances in medicine have also increased the human lifespan, especially for white and middle- or upper-class individuals in high-income nations; medical advances have also contributed to the declining death rate in low-income nations, where birthrates have not yet been curbed.

Just as technology has brought about improvements in the quality and length of life for many, it has also created the potential for new disasters, ranging from global warfare to localized technological disasters at toxic waste sites. As sociologist William Ogburn (1966/1922) suggested, when a change in the material culture occurs



FIGURE 16.12 How might advances in medicine—such as the ability of postmenopausal women to bear children—create social change?

in society, a period of *cultural lag* follows in which the nonmaterial (ideological) culture has not yet caught up with material development. The rate of technological advancement at the level of material culture today is mind-boggling. Many of us can never hope to understand technological advances in the areas of artificial intelligence, holography, virtual reality, biotechnology, cold fusion, and robotics.

One of the ironies of twenty-first-century high technology is the increased vulnerability that results from the increasing complexity of such systems. We have already seen this in situations ranging from jetliners used as terrorist weapons to identity theft and fraud on the Internet and the hacking of massive public and private databases.

Social Institutions and Change

Many changes occurred in the family, religion, education, the economy, and the political system during the twentieth century and early in the twenty-first century. The size and composition of families in the United States changed with the dramatic increase in the number of single-person and single-parent households. Changes in families produced changes in the socialization of children, many of whom spend large amounts of time playing video games, texting friends, posting their daily activities on Facebook or Twitter, or spending time in childcare facilities outside their own home. Although some political and religious leaders advocate a return to “traditional” family life, numerous scholars argue that such families never worked quite as well as some might wish to believe.

Public education changed dramatically in the United States during the last century. This country was one of the first to provide “universal” education for students regardless of their ability to pay. As a result, at least until recently the United States has had one of the most highly educated populations in the world. Today, the United States still has one of the best public education systems in the world for the top 15 percent of the students, but it badly fails the bottom 25 percent. As the nature of the economy changes, schools almost inevitably will have to change as well, if for no other reason than demands from leaders in business and industry for an educated workforce that allows U.S. companies to compete in a global economic environment. Many business and political leaders believe that education is the single most important factor in the future of the United States. However, in difficult economic times when local, state, and federal budgets are strained, public education is one of the first institutions to undergo the axe as teachers are let go, school buildings are allowed to further decay, and students are not provided with the necessary physical setting and learning tools.

As we move into the third decade of the twenty-first century, we need new ways of conceptualizing social life at both the macrolevel and the microlevel. The sociological imagination helps us think about

how personal troubles—regardless of our race, class, gender, age, sexual orientation, or physical abilities and disabilities—are intertwined with the public issues of our society and the global community of which we are a part. After one problem appears to be alleviated, additional problems may crop up, creating a negative chain reaction if we adopt a “business as usual” approach for dealing with these challenges (■ Figure 16.13).

And, as we learned in the narratives that opened this chapter, vigilance and persistence are important when individuals or groups are trying to bring about positive change. After one problem appears to be alleviated, additional problems crop up, but we must rise to the challenge. In the present and future, many social changes will continue to occur in social institutions, including the family, education, religion, politics, media, and law. In the future we need new ways to conceptualize social life at both the macrolevel and the microlevel so that we can bring about



FIGURE 16.13 The pollution of lakes, rivers, and other bodies of water has an adverse effect on food supplies, air quality, and the entire environment. What influence does a “business as usual” approach have on environmental quality in your area?

positive changes that benefit the well-being of all people and minimize harmful, destructive changes that might produce catastrophic results for our nation or the world.

A Few Final Thoughts

In this text we have covered a substantial amount of material, examined different perspectives on a wide variety of social issues, and suggested different methods

by which to deal with them. The purpose of this text is not to encourage you to take any particular point of view; rather, it is to provide different viewpoints that may be helpful to you and to society in dealing with the pressing issues of the twenty-first century. Possessing that understanding, we can hope that the future will be something we can all look forward to—producing a better way of life, not only for people in this country but worldwide as well.

Q&A Chapter Review

Use these questions and answers to check how well you've achieved the learning objectives set out at the beginning of this chapter.

LO1 What is collective behavior, and what factors contribute to it?

Social change—the alteration, modification, or transformation of public policy, culture, or social institutions over time—is usually brought about by *collective behavior*, which is defined as relatively spontaneous, unstructured activity that typically violates established social norms. Collective behavior occurs when some common influence or stimulus produces a response from a relatively large number of people.

LO2 What are the most common types of crowd behavior?

A crowd is a relatively large number of people in one another's immediate presence. Sociologist Herbert Blumer divided crowds into four categories: (1) casual crowds, (2) conventional crowds, (3) expressive crowds, and (4) acting crowds (including mobs, riots, and panics). A fifth type of crowd is a protest crowd.

LO3 What are some explanations of crowd behavior?

Social scientists have developed several theories to explain crowd behavior. Contagion theory asserts that a crowd takes on a life of its own as people are transformed from rational beings into part of an organism that acts on its own. A variation on this is social unrest and circular reaction—people express their discontent to others, who communicate back similar feelings, resulting in a conscious effort to engage in the crowd's behavior. Convergence theory asserts that people with similar attributes find other like-minded persons with whom they can release underlying personal tendencies. Emergent norm theory asserts that as a crowd develops, it comes up with its own norms that replace more conventional norms of behavior.

LO4 What is mass behavior and how does it differ from other forms of collective behavior?

Mass behavior is collective behavior that occurs when people respond to the same event in the same way even if they are not in geographic proximity to one another. Rumors, gossip, mass hysteria, fads and fashions, and public opinion are forms of mass behavior. A fad is a temporary but widely copied activity enthusiastically followed by large numbers of people. Fashion is defined as a currently valued style of behavior, thinking, or appearance.

LO5 What are the major types of social movements?

A social movement is an organized group that acts consciously to promote or resist change through collective action. Reform, revolutionary, religious, and alternative movements are the major types identified by sociologists. Reform movements seek to improve society by changing some specific aspect of the social structure. Revolutionary movements seek to bring about a total change in society—sometimes by the use of terrorism. Religious movements seek to produce radical change in individuals based on spiritual or supernatural belief systems. Alternative movements seek limited change of some aspect of people's behavior. Resistance movements seek to prevent change or to undo change that has already occurred.

LO6 What are the major theories of social movements?

Relative deprivation theory, value-added theory, resource mobilization theory, social constructionist theory: frame analysis, political opportunity theory, and new social movement theory are among the major social movement theories. Relative deprivation theory asserts that if people are discontent when they compare their accomplishments with those of others similarly situated, they are more likely to join a social movement than are people who are relatively

content with their status. According to value-added theory, six conditions are required for a social movement: (1) a perceived problem, (2) a perception that the authorities are not resolving the problem, (3) a spread of the belief to an adequate number of people, (4) a precipitating incident, (5) mobilization of other people by leaders, and (6) a lack of social control. By contrast, resource mobilization theory asserts that successful social movements can occur only when they gain the support of political and economic elites, who provide access to the resources necessary to maintain the movement. Research based on social constructionist theory uses frame analysis, which often focuses on how people use social interactions to socially construct their grievances and to determine what they think should be done to resolve them. By contrast, research based on political opportunity theory identifies reasons why social protests are most likely to occur when potential protesters and movement organizers perceive that limited opportunities exist for them within the political system. Finally, research based on new social movement theory looks at various identity factors of potential protesters, including their race, class, gender, and sexuality, to help explain why collective action and social movements emerge (for example, people who believe that they have experienced environmental racism because of their race/ethnicity and class).

LO7 What has been the past, present, and future of social change?

Throughout history, social change has been rooted in changes in the physical environment that produce changes in the lives of people. Social change has also been related to changes in population size, distribution, and composition because these affect the culture and social structure of a society and change the relationships among nations. Technology is another factor in social change. Technological advances change many other aspects of social life, including bringing about improvements in the quality and length of life. However, technological advances also bring about changes that make us more vulnerable to such concerns as loss of privacy, heightened acts of violence and terrorism, and global unrest and even war. In the present and future, many social changes will continue to occur in social institutions, including the family, education, religion, politics, media, and law. In the future we need new ways to conceptualize social life at both the macrolevel and the microlevel so that we can bring about positive changes that benefit the well-being of all people and minimize harmful, destructive changes that might produce catastrophic results for our nation or the world.

Key Terms

civil disobedience 493

collective behavior 489

crowd 491

environmental racism 505

gossip 495

mass 491

mass behavior 495

mob 492

panic 493

propaganda 497

public opinion 497

riot 492

rumor 495

social change 488

social movement 497

Questions for Critical Thinking

- 1 What types of collective behavior in the United States do you believe are influenced by inequalities based on race/ethnicity, class, gender, age, or disabilities? Why?
- 2 Which of the four explanations of crowd behavior (contagion theory, social unrest and circular reaction, convergence theory, and emergent norm theory) do you believe best explains crowd behavior? Why?
- 3 In the text the climate change activism and environmental movements are analyzed in terms of the value-added theory. How would you analyze that movement under (a) the relative deprivation theory and (b) the resource mobilization theory?
- 4 Using the sociological imagination that you have gained in this course, what are some positive steps that you believe might be taken in the United States and worldwide to make the world a better place for everyone? What types of collective behavior and/or social movements might be required in order to take those steps?

Answers to **Sociology Quiz**

Collective Behavior, Climate Change, and Environmental Activism

1	True	Greenhouse gases are the primary component that contributes to radiative forcing of the climate and thus to global warming.
2	False	Climate change policies were first introduced in the United States in the early 1950s when the Environmental Protection Agency began to notice significant changes (such as in temperature, precipitation, and wind patterns) that lasted for an extended period of time. With the acceleration of climate change in recent years, many grassroots movements have emerged to try to reduce its impact.
3	False	Public opinion polls continue to show that the majority of people in the United States have concerns about climate change and favorable attitudes regarding protection of the environment; however, far fewer individuals are actively involved in social movements to reduce global warming or eliminate environmental degradation.
4	True	Environmental and climate change activists have held sit-ins, marches, boycotts, and strikes, which sometimes take the form of civil disobedience. In the 2010s student activism became a more important force in calling attention to climate change and to the harm that is being done to the environment worldwide.
5	True	Rumors are most likely to emerge and circulate when people have very little information on a topic that is important to them. For example, rumors abound in times of natural or technological disasters, when people are fearful and often willing to believe a worst-case scenario.
6	True	Many social movements, including grassroots climate change and environmental activism, attempt to influence public opinion so that local and national decision makers will feel obliged to correct a specific problem through changes in public policy.
7	True	Most social movements are reform movements that focus on improving society by changing some specific aspect of the social structure. Examples include climate change movements and the disability rights movement.
8	False	Most sociological studies have found that people respond differently to natural disasters such as floods, tornados, hurricanes, and fires, which usually occur very suddenly, than to technological disasters, which may occur gradually. One major difference is the communal bonding people feel as they try to help each other out following natural disasters. By contrast, technological disasters—such as industrial pollution; toxic waste; dam, bridge, and highway overpass failures; factory explosions; and chemical spills—often result in extreme social conflict and sometimes lawsuits.

A

absolute poverty a level of economic deprivation that exists when people do not have the means to secure the most basic necessities of life.

achieved status a social position that a person assumes voluntarily as a result of personal choice, merit, or direct effort.

acute diseases illnesses that strike suddenly and cause dramatic incapacitation and sometimes death.

ageism prejudice and discrimination against people on the basis of age, particularly against older persons.

agents of socialization the persons, groups, or institutions that teach us what we need to know in order to participate in society.

aggregate a collection of people who happen to be in the same place at the same time but share little else in common.

agrarian societies societies that use the technology of large-scale farming, including animal-drawn or energy-powered plows and equipment, to produce their food supply.

alienation a feeling of powerlessness and estrangement from other people and from oneself.

animism the belief that plants, animals, or other elements of the natural world are endowed with spirits or life forces having an effect on events in society.

anomie Emile Durkheim's term for a condition in which social control becomes ineffective as a result of the loss of shared values and of a sense of purpose in society.

anticipatory socialization the process by which knowledge and skills are learned for future roles.

ascribed status a social position conferred at birth or received involuntarily later in life, based on attributes over which the individual has little or no control, such as race/ethnicity, age, and gender.

assimilation a process by which members of subordinate racial and ethnic groups become absorbed into the dominant culture.

authoritarian leaders leaders who make all major group decisions and assign tasks to members.

authoritarian personality a personality type characterized by excessive conformity, submissiveness to authority, intolerance,

insecurity, a high level of superstition, and rigid, stereotypic thinking.

authoritarianism a political system controlled by rulers who deny popular participation in government.

authority power that people accept as legitimate rather than coercive.

B

beliefs the mental acceptance or conviction that certain things are true or real.

bilateral descent a system of tracing descent through both the mother's and father's sides of the family.

blended families a family consisting of a husband and wife, children from previous marriages, and children (if any) from the new marriage.

body consciousness how a person perceives and feels about his or her body.

bureaucracy an organizational model characterized by a hierarchy of authority, a clear division of labor, explicit rules and procedures, and impersonality in personnel matters.

bureaucratic personality a psychological construct that describes those workers who are more concerned with following correct procedures than they are with getting the job done correctly.

C

capitalism an economic system characterized by private ownership of the means of production, from which personal profits can be derived through market competition and without government intervention.

capitalist class (bourgeoisie) Karl Marx's term for those who own and control the means of production.

caste system a system of social inequality in which people's status is permanently determined at birth based on their parents' ascribed characteristics.

category a number of people who may never have met one another but share a similar characteristic, such as education level, age, race, or gender.

charismatic authority power legitimized on the basis of a leader's exceptional personal qualities or the demonstration of extraordinary insight and accomplishment

that inspire loyalty and obedience from followers.

chronic diseases illnesses that are long term or lifelong and that develop gradually or are present from birth.

church a large, bureaucratically organized religious organization that tends to seek accommodation with the larger society in order to maintain some degree of control over it.

civil disobedience nonviolent action that seeks to change a policy or law by refusing to comply with it.

civil religion the set of beliefs, rituals, and symbols that makes sacred the values of the society and places the nation in the context of the ultimate system of meaning.

class conflict Karl Marx's term for the struggle between the capitalist class and the working class.

class system a type of stratification based on the ownership and control of resources and on the type of work that people do.

cohabitation a situation in which two people live together and think of themselves as a couple, without being legally married.

collective behavior voluntary, often spontaneous activity that is engaged in by a large number of people and typically violates dominant-group norms and values.

comparable worth (or *pay equity*): the belief that wages ought to reflect the worth of a job, not the gender or race of the worker.

conflict perspectives the sociological approach that views groups in society as engaged in a continuous power struggle for control of scarce resources.

conformity the process of maintaining or changing behavior to comply with the norms established by a society, subculture, or other group.

conglomerates a combination of businesses in different commercial areas, all of which are owned by one holding company.

content analysis the systematic examination of cultural artifacts or various forms of communication to extract thematic data and draw conclusions about social life.

contingent work part-time work, temporary work, or subcontracted work that offers advantages to employers but that can be detrimental to the welfare of workers.

control group the group that contains the subjects who are not exposed to the independent variable.

core nations according to world systems theory, nations that are dominant capitalist centers characterized by high levels of industrialization and urbanization.

corporate crime illegal acts committed by corporate employees on behalf of the corporation and with its support.

corporations organizations that have legal powers, such as the ability to enter into contracts and buy and sell property, separate from their individual owners.

correlation a relationship that exists when two variables are associated more frequently than could be expected by chance.

counterculture a group that strongly rejects dominant societal values and norms and seeks alternative lifestyles.

credentialism a process of social selection in which class advantage and social status are linked to the possession of academic qualifications.

crime behavior that violates criminal law and is punishable with fines, jail terms, and/or other negative sanctions.

criminal justice system the local, state, and federal agencies that enforce laws, adjudicate crimes, and treat and rehabilitate criminals.

criminology the systematic study of crime and the criminal justice system, including the police, courts, and prisons.

crossdresser a male who dresses as a woman or a female who dresses as a man but does not alter his or her genitalia.

crowd a relatively large number of people who are in one another's immediate vicinity.

crude birthrate the number of live births per 1,000 people in a population in a given year.

crude death rate the number of deaths per 1,000 people in a population in a given year.

cult a loosely organized religious group with practices and teachings outside the dominant cultural and religious traditions of a society.

cultural capital Pierre Bourdieu's term for people's social assets, including values, beliefs, attitudes, and competencies in language and culture.

cultural imperialism the extensive infusion of one nation's culture into other nations.

cultural lag William Ogburn's term for a gap between the technical development of a society and its moral and legal institutions.

cultural relativism the belief that the behaviors and customs of any culture must be viewed and analyzed by the culture's own standards.

cultural universals customs and practices that occur across all societies.

culture the knowledge, language, values, customs, and material objects that are

passed from person to person and from one generation to the next in a human group or society.

culture shock the disorientation that people feel when they encounter cultures radically different from their own and believe they cannot depend on their own taken-for-granted assumptions about life.

D

deinstitutionalization the practice of rapidly discharging patients from mental hospitals into the community.

demedicalization the process whereby a problem ceases to be defined as an illness or a disorder.

democracy a political system in which the people hold the ruling power either directly or through elected representatives.

democratic leaders leaders who encourage group discussion and decision making through consensus building.

democratic socialism an economic and political system that combines private ownership of some of the means of production, governmental distribution of some essential goods and services, and free elections.

demographic transition the process by which some societies have moved from high birth and death rates to relatively low birth and death rates as a result of technological development.

demography a subfield of sociology that examines population size, composition, and distribution.

denomination a large, organized religion characterized by accommodation to society but frequently lacking in the ability or intention to dominate society.

dependency theory the belief that global poverty can at least partially be attributed to the fact that the low-income countries have been exploited by the high-income countries.

dependent variable in an experiment, the variable assumed to be caused by the independent variable(s).

deviance any behavior, belief, or condition that violates significant social norms in the society or group in which it occurs.

differential association theory the proposition that people have a greater tendency to deviate from societal norms when they frequently associate with persons who are more favorable toward deviance than conformity.

disability a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major activities that a person would normally do at a given stage of life and that may result in stigmatization or discrimination against the person with a disability.

discrimination actions or practices of dominant-group members (or their representatives) that have a harmful effect on members of a subordinate group.

division of labor how the various tasks of a society are divided up and performed.

domestic partnerships household partnerships in which an unmarried couple lives together in a committed, sexually intimate relationship and is granted some of the same rights and benefits as those accorded to married heterosexual couples.

dominant group a racial or ethnic group that has the greatest power and resources in a society.

dramaturgical analysis Erving Goffman's term for the study of social interaction that compares everyday life to a theatrical presentation.

drug any substance—other than food and water—that, when taken into the body, alters its functioning in some way.

dual-earner marriages marriages in which both spouses are in the labor force.

dyad a group composed of two members.

E

ecclesia a religious organization that is so integrated into the dominant culture that it claims as its membership all members of a society.

economy the social institution that ensures the maintenance of society through the production, distribution, and consumption of goods and services.

education the social institution responsible for the systematic transmission of knowledge, skills, and cultural values within a formally organized structure.

egalitarian family a family structure in which both partners share power and authority equally.

ego Sigmund Freud's term for the rational, reality-oriented component of personality that imposes restrictions on the innate pleasure-seeking drives of the id.

elite model an analysis of political systems that views power in political systems as being concentrated in the hands of a small group of elites, and the masses are relatively powerless.

endogamy the practice of marrying within one's own group.

environmental racism the belief that a disproportionate number of hazardous facilities (including industries such as waste disposal/treatment and chemical plants) are placed in low-income areas populated primarily by people of color.

ethnic group a collection of people distinguished, by others or by themselves, primarily on the basis of cultural or nationality characteristics.

ethnic pluralism the coexistence of a variety of distinct racial and ethnic groups within one society.

ethnocentrism the practice of judging all other cultures by one's own culture.

ethnography a detailed study of the life and activities of a group of people by researchers who may live with that group over a period of years.

ethnomethodology the study of the commonsense knowledge that people use to understand the situations in which they find themselves.

exogamy the practice of marrying outside one's own group.

experiment a carefully designed situation in which the researcher studies the effect of certain variables on subjects' attitudes or behavior.

experimental group the group that contains the subjects who are exposed to an independent variable (the experimental condition) to study its effect on them.

expressive leadership leadership that provides emotional support for members.

extended family a family unit composed of relatives in addition to parents and children who live in the same household.

F

face-saving behavior Erving Goffman's term for the strategies we use to rescue our performance when we experience a potential or actual loss of face.

families relationships in which people live together with commitment, form an economic unit and care for any young, and consider their identity to be significantly attached to the group.

family of orientation the family into which a person is born and in which early socialization usually takes place.

family of procreation the family that a person forms by having, adopting, or otherwise creating children.

feminism the belief that men and women are equal and should be valued equally and have equal rights.

feminization of poverty the trend in which women are disproportionately represented among individuals living in poverty.

fertility the actual level of childbearing for an individual or a population.

folkways informal norms or everyday customs that may be violated without serious consequences within a particular culture.

formal organization a highly structured group formed for the purpose of completing certain tasks or achieving specific goals.

functionalist perspectives the sociological approach that views society as a stable, orderly system.

fundamentalism a traditional religious doctrine that is conservative, is typically opposed to modernity, and rejects "worldly pleasures" in favor of otherworldly spirituality.

G

Gemeinschaft a traditional society in which social relationships are based on personal bonds of friendship and kinship and on intergenerational stability.

gender the culturally and socially constructed differences between females and males found in the meanings, beliefs, and practices associated with "femininity" and "masculinity."

gender bias behavior that shows favoritism toward one gender over the other.

gender identity a person's perception of the self as female or male.

gender role the attitudes, behavior, and activities that are socially defined as appropriate for each sex and that are learned through the socialization process.

gender socialization the aspect of socialization that contains specific messages and practices concerning the nature of being female or male in a specific group or society.

gendered racism the interactive effect of racism and sexism on the exploitation of women of color.

generalized other George Herbert Mead's term for a child's awareness of the demands and expectations of the society as a whole or of a child's subculture.

genocide the deliberate, systematic killing of an entire people or nation.

gentrification the process by which members of the middle and upper-middle classes, especially whites, move into a central-city area and renovate existing properties.

Gesellschaft a large, urban society in which social bonds are based on impersonal and specialized relationships, with little long-term commitment to the group or consensus on values.

global stratification the unequal distribution of wealth, power, and prestige on a global basis, resulting in people having vastly different lifestyles and life chances both within and among the nations of the world.

goal displacement a process that occurs in organizations when the rules become an end in themselves rather than a means to an end, and organizational survival becomes more important than achievement of goals.

gossip rumors about the personal lives of individuals.

government the formal organization that has the legal and political authority to regulate the relationships among members of a society and between the society and those outside its borders.

groupthink the process by which members of a cohesive group arrive at a decision that many individual members privately believe is unwise.

H

health a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being.

health care any activity intended to improve health.

health maintenance organizations

(HMOs) companies that provide, for a set monthly fee, total care with an emphasis on prevention to avoid costly treatment later.

hidden curriculum the transmission of cultural values and attitudes, such as conformity and obedience to authority, through implied demands found in the rules, routines, and regulations of schools.

high culture classical music, opera, ballet, live theater, and other activities usually patronized by elite audiences.

high-income countries nations with highly industrialized economies; technologically advanced industrial, administrative, and service occupations; and relatively high levels of national and personal income.

holistic medicine an approach to health care that focuses on prevention of illness and disease and is aimed at treating the whole person—body and mind—rather than just the part or parts in which symptoms occur.

homogamy the pattern of individuals marrying those who have similar characteristics, such as race/ethnicity, religious background, age, education, or social class.

homophobia extreme prejudice and sometimes discriminatory actions directed at gays, lesbians, bisexuals, transgender persons, and others who are perceived as not being heterosexual.

horticultural societies societies based on technology that supports the cultivation of plants to provide food.

hunting-and-gathering societies societies that use simple technology for hunting animals and gathering vegetation.

hypothesis a statement of the expected relationship between two or more variables.

I

id Sigmund Freud's term for the component of personality that includes all of the individual's basic biological drives and needs that demand immediate gratification.

ideal type an abstract model that describes the recurring characteristics of some phenomenon.

illegitimate opportunity structures circumstances that provide an opportunity for people to acquire through illegitimate activities what they cannot achieve through legitimate channels.

impression management (presentation of self) Erving Goffman's term for people's efforts to present themselves to others in ways that are most favorable to their own interests or image.

income the economic gain derived from wages, salaries, income transfers (governmental aid), and ownership of property.

independent variable in an experiment, the variable assumed to be the cause of the relationship between variables.

individual discrimination behavior consisting of one-on-one acts by members of the dominant group that harm members of the subordinate group or their property.

industrial societies societies based on technology that mechanizes production.

industrialization the process by which societies are transformed from dependence on agriculture and handmade products to an emphasis on manufacturing and related industries.

infant mortality rate the number of deaths of infants under one year of age per 1,000 live births in a given year.

informal side of a bureaucracy those aspects of participants' day-to-day activities and interactions that ignore, bypass, or do not correspond with the official rules and procedures of the bureaucracy.

ingroup a group to which a person belongs and with which the person feels a sense of identity.

institutional discrimination the day-to-day practices of organizations and institutions that have a harmful effect on members of subordinate groups.

instrumental leadership goal- or task-oriented leadership.

intergenerational mobility the social movement experienced by family members from one generation to the next.

interlocking corporate directorates members of the board of directors of one corporation who also sit on the board(s) of other corporations.

internal colonialism according to conflict theorists, a practice that occurs when members of a racial or ethnic group are conquered or colonized and forcibly placed under the economic and political control of the dominant group.

Internet crime illegal acts committed by criminals on the Internet, including FBI-related scams, identity theft, advance fee fraud, nonauction/nondelivery of merchandise, and overpayment fraud.

intersex person an individual who is born with a reproductive or sexual anatomy that does not correspond to the typical definitions of male or female; in other words, the person's sexual differentiation is ambiguous.

interview a data-collection encounter in which an interviewer asks the respondent questions and records the answers.

intragenerational mobility the social movement of individuals within their own lifetime.

invasion the process by which a new category of people or type of land use arrives in an area previously occupied by another group or type of land use.

iron law of oligarchy according to Robert Michels, the tendency of bureaucracies to be ruled by a few people.

J

job deskilling a reduction in the proficiency needed to perform a specific job that leads to a corresponding reduction in the wages for that job or in the use of nonhuman technologies to perform the work.

juvenile delinquency a violation of law or the commission of a status offense by young people.

K

kinship a social network of people based on common ancestry, marriage, or adoption.

L

labeling theory the proposition that deviance is a socially constructed process in which social control agencies designate certain people as deviants and they, in turn, come to accept the label placed upon them and begin to act accordingly.

laissez-faire leaders leaders who are only minimally involved in decision making and who encourage group members to make their own decisions.

language a set of symbols that expresses ideas and enables people to think and communicate with one another.

latent functions unintended functions that are hidden and remain unacknowledged by participants.

laws formal, standardized norms that have been enacted by legislatures and are enforced by formal sanctions.

leadership the ability to influence what goes on in a group or social system.

life chances Max Weber's term for the extent to which individuals have access to important societal resources such as food, clothing, shelter, education, and health care.

life expectancy a statistical estimate of the average number of years that a person born in a specific year will live.

looking-glass self Charles Horton Cooley's term for the way in which a person's sense of self is derived from the perceptions of others.

low-income countries primarily agrarian nations with little industrialization and low levels of national and personal income.

M

macrolevel analysis an approach that examines whole societies, large-scale social structures, and social systems instead of looking at important social dynamics in individuals' lives.

managed care any system of cost containment that closely monitors and controls health care providers' decisions about medical procedures, diagnostic tests, and other services that should be provided to patients.

manifest functions functions that are intended and/or overtly recognized by the participants in a social unit.

marginal jobs jobs that differ from the employment norms of the society in which they are located.

marriage a legally recognized and/or socially approved arrangement between two or more individuals that carries certain rights and obligations and usually involves sexual activity.

mass a number of people who share an interest in a specific idea or issue but who are not in one another's immediate vicinity.

mass behavior collective behavior that takes place when people (who are often geographically separated from one another) respond to the same event in much the same way.

mass media large-scale organizations that use print or electronic means (such as radio, television, film, and the Internet) to communicate with large numbers of people.

master status the most important status that a person occupies.

material culture the physical or tangible creations that members of a society make, use, and share.

matriarchal family a family structure in which authority is held by the eldest female (usually the mother).

matriarchy a hierarchical system of social organization in which cultural, political, and economic structures are controlled by women.

matrilineal descent a system of tracing descent through the mother's side of the family.

matrilocal residence the custom of a married couple living in the same household (or community) as the wife's parents.

mechanical solidarity Emile Durkheim's term for the social cohesion of preindustrial societies, in which there is minimal division of labor and people feel united by shared values and common social bonds.

medical-industrial complex local physicians, local hospitals, and global health-related industries such as insurance companies and pharmaceutical and medical supply companies.

medicalization the process whereby nonmedical problems become defined and treated as illnesses or disorders.

medicine an institutionalized system for the scientific diagnosis, treatment, and prevention of illness.

meritocracy a hierarchy in which all positions are rewarded based on people's ability and credentials.

microlevel analysis an approach that focuses on small groups rather than large-scale social structures.

middle-income countries nations with industrializing economies, particularly in urban areas, and moderate levels of national and personal income.

migration the movement of people from one geographic area to another for the purpose of changing residency.

military-industrial complex the mutual interdependence of the military establishment and private military contractors.

mixed economy an economic system that combines elements of a market economy (capitalism) with elements of a command economy (socialism).

mob a highly emotional crowd whose members engage in, or are ready to engage in, violence against a specific target—a person, a category of people, or physical property.

modernization theory a perspective that links global inequality to different levels of economic development and suggests that low-income economies can move to middle- and high-income economies by achieving self-sustained economic growth.

monarchy a political system in which power resides in one person or family and is passed from generation to generation through lines of inheritance.

monogamy the practice or state of being married to one person at a time.

mores strongly held norms with moral and ethical connotations that may not be violated without serious consequences in a particular culture.

mortality the incidence of death in a population.

N

neolocal residence the custom of a married couple living in their own residence apart from both the husband's and the wife's parents.

network a web of social relationships that links one person with other people and, through them, with other people they know.

new international division of labor theory the perspective that views commodity production as being split into fragments

that can be assigned to whatever part of the world can provide the most profitable combination of capital and labor.

nonmaterial culture the abstract or intangible human creations of society that influence people's behavior.

nonverbal communication the transfer of information between persons without the use of words.

norms established rules of behavior or standards of conduct.

nuclear family a family composed of one or two parents and their dependent children, all of whom live apart from other relatives.

O

occupational (white-collar) crime illegal activities committed by people in the course of their employment or financial affairs.

occupations categories of jobs that involve similar activities at different work sites.

official poverty line the income standard that is based on what the federal government considers to be the minimum amount of money required for living at a subsistence level.

oligopoly an industry dominated by just a few companies.

organic solidarity Emile Durkheim's term for the social cohesion found in industrial (and perhaps postindustrial) societies, in which people perform very specialized tasks and feel united by their mutual dependence.

organized crime a business operation that supplies illegal goods and services for profit.

outgroup a group to which a person does not belong and toward which the person may feel a sense of competitiveness or hostility.

P

panic a form of crowd behavior that occurs when a large number of people react to a real or perceived threat with strong emotions and self-destructive behavior.

participant observation a research method in which researchers collect systematic observations while being part of the activities of the group being studied.

pastoral societies societies based on technology that supports the domestication of large animals to provide food.

patriarchal family a family structure in which authority is held by the eldest male (usually the father).

patriarchy a hierarchical system of social organization in which cultural, political, and economic structures are controlled by men.

patrilineal descent a system of tracing descent through the father's side of the family.

patrilocal residence the custom of a married couple living in the same household (or community) as the husband's parents.

pay gap the disparity between women's and men's earnings.

peer group a group of people who are linked by common interests, equal social position, and (usually) similar age.

peripheral nations according to world systems theory, nations that are dependent on core nations for capital, have little or no industrialization (other than what may be brought in by core nations), and have uneven patterns of urbanization.

personal space the immediate area surrounding a person that the person claims as private.

pink-collar occupations relatively low-paying, nonmanual, semiskilled positions primarily held by women.

pluralist model an analysis of political systems that views power as being widely dispersed throughout many competing interest groups.

political action committees (PACs) organizations of special interest groups that solicit contributions from donors and fund campaigns to help elect (or defeat) candidates based on their stances on specific issues.

political crime illegal or unethical acts involving the usurpation of power by government officials or illegal/unethical acts perpetrated against the government by outsiders seeking to make a political statement, undermine the government, or overthrow it.

political party an organization whose purpose is to gain and hold legitimate control of government.

political socialization the process by which people learn political attitudes, values, and behavior.

politics the social institution through which power is acquired and exercised by some people and groups.

polyandry the concurrent marriage of one woman with two or more men.

polygamy the concurrent marriage of a person of one sex with two or more members of the opposite sex.

polygyny the concurrent marriage of one man with two or more women.

popular culture activities, products, and services that are assumed to appeal primarily to members of the middle and working classes.

population composition the biological and social characteristics of a population, including age, sex, race, marital status, education, occupation, income, and size of household.

population pyramid a graphic representation of the distribution of a population by sex and age.

positivism a belief that the world can best be understood through scientific inquiry.

postindustrial society societies in which technology supports a service- and information-based economy.

postmodern perspectives the sociological approach that attempts to explain social life in contemporary societies characterized by postindustrialization, consumerism, and global communication.

power the ability of people or groups to achieve their goals despite opposition from others.

power according to Max Weber, the ability of persons or groups to achieve their goals despite opposition from others.

prejudice a negative attitude based on faulty generalizations about members of specific racial, ethnic, or other groups.

prestige the respect or regard that a person or status position is given by others.

primary deviance the initial act of rule-breaking.

primary group a small, less specialized group in which members engage in face-to-face, emotion-based interactions over an extended period of time.

primary labor market the sector of the labor market that consists of high-paying jobs with good benefits that have some degree of security and the possibility of future advancement.

primary sex characteristics the genitalia used in the reproductive process.

primary socialization the process of learning that begins at birth and occurs in the home and family.

primary-sector production the sector of the economy that extracts raw materials and natural resources from the environment.

profane the everyday, secular, or “worldly” aspects of life.

professions high-status, knowledge-based occupations.

propaganda information provided by individuals or groups that have a vested interest in furthering their own cause or damaging an opposing one.

property crimes burglary (breaking into private property to commit a serious crime), motor-vehicle theft, larceny-theft (theft of property worth \$50 or more), and arson.

public opinion the attitudes and beliefs communicated by ordinary citizens to decision makers.

punishment any action designed to deprive a person of things of value (including liberty) because of some offense the person is thought to have committed.

Q

qualitative research sociological research methods that use interpretive descriptions (words) rather than statistics (numbers) to analyze underlying meanings and patterns of social relationships.

quantitative research sociological research methods based on the goal of scientific objectivity and that focus on data that can be measured numerically.

questionnaire a printed research instrument containing a series of items to which subjects respond.

R

race a category of people who have been singled out as inferior or superior, often on the basis of real or alleged physical characteristics such as skin color, hair texture, eye shape, or other subjectively selected attributes.

racial socialization the aspect of socialization that contains specific messages and practices concerning the nature of our racial or ethnic status as it relates to our identity, interpersonal relationships, and location in the social hierarchy.

racism a set of attitudes, beliefs, and practices that is used to justify the superior treatment of one racial or ethnic group and the inferior treatment of another racial or ethnic group.

rational choice theory of deviance the proposition that deviant behavior occurs when a person weighs the costs and benefits of nonconventional or criminal behavior and determines that the benefits will outweigh the risks involved in such an action.

rational-legal authority power legitimized by law or written rules and regulations.

rationality the process by which traditional methods of social organization, characterized by informality and spontaneity, are gradually replaced by efficiently administered formal rules and procedures.

reciprocal socialization the process by which the feelings, thoughts, appearance, and behavior of individuals who are undergoing socialization also have a direct influence on those agents of socialization who are attempting to influence them.

reference group a group that strongly influences a person's behavior and social attitudes, regardless of whether that individual is an actual member.

relative poverty a level of economic deprivation that exists when people may be able to afford basic necessities but are still unable to maintain an average standard of living.

reliability the extent to which a study or research instrument yields consistent results when applied to different individuals at one time or to the same individuals over time.

religion a social institution composed of a unified system of beliefs, symbols, and rituals—based on some sacred or supernatural realm—that guides human behavior, gives meaning to life, and unites believers into a community.

representative democracy a form of democracy whereby citizens elect representatives to serve as bridges between themselves and the government.

research methods specific strategies or techniques for systematically conducting research.

resocialization the process of learning a new and different set of attitudes, values, and behaviors from those in one's background and previous experience.

riot violent crowd behavior that is fueled by deep-seated emotions but not directed at one specific target.

role a set of behavioral expectations associated with a given status.

role conflict a situation in which incompatible role demands are placed on a person by two or more statuses held at the same time.

role exit a situation in which people disengage from social roles that have been central to their self-identity.

role expectation a group's or society's definition of the way that a specific role ought to be played.

role performance how a person actually plays a role.

role strain a condition that occurs when incompatible demands are built into a single status that a person occupies.

role-taking the process by which a person mentally assumes the role of another person or group in order to understand the world from that person's or group's point of view.

routinization of charisma the process by which charismatic authority is succeeded by a bureaucracy controlled by a rationally established authority or by a combination of traditional and bureaucratic authority.

rumors an unsubstantiated report on an issue or a subject.

S

sacred those aspects of life that are extraordinary or supernatural.

sanctions rewards for appropriate behavior or penalties for inappropriate behavior.

Sapir-Whorf hypothesis the proposition that language shapes the view of reality of its speakers.

scapegoat a person or group that is incapable of offering resistance to the hostility or aggression of others.

second shift Hochschild's term for the domestic work that employed women perform at home after they complete their workday on the job.

secondary analysis a research method in which researchers use existing material and

- analyze data that were originally collected by others.
- secondary deviance** the process that occurs when a person who has been labeled a deviant accepts that new identity and continues the deviant behavior.
- secondary group** a larger, more specialized group in which members engage in more impersonal, goal-oriented relationships for a limited period of time.
- secondary labor market** the sector of the labor market that consists of low-paying jobs with few benefits and very little job security or possibility for future advancement.
- secondary sex characteristics** the physical traits (other than reproductive organs) that identify an individual's sex.
- secondary socialization** the process of learning that takes place outside the home—in settings such as schools, religious organizations, and the workplace—and helps individuals learn how to act in appropriate ways in various situations.
- secondary-sector production** the sector of the economy that processes raw materials (from the primary sector) into finished goods.
- sect** a relatively small religious group that has broken away from another religious organization to renew what it views as the original version of the faith.
- secularization** the process by which religious beliefs, practices, and institutions lose their significance in sectors of society and culture.
- segregation** the spatial and social separation of categories of people by race, ethnicity, class, gender, and/or religion.
- self-concept** the totality of our beliefs and feelings about ourselves.
- self-fulfilling prophecy** a situation in which a false belief or prediction produces behavior that makes the originally false belief come true.
- semiperipheral nations** according to world systems theory, nations that are more developed than peripheral nations but less developed than core nations.
- sex** the biological and anatomical differences between females and males.
- sex ratio** the number of males for every hundred females in a given population.
- sexism** the subordination of one sex, usually female, based on the assumed superiority of the other sex.
- sexual orientation** an individual's preference for emotional-sexual relationships with members of the different sex (heterosexuality), the same sex (homosexuality), or both (bisexuality).
- sexualization** the act or processes whereby an individual or group is seen as sexual in nature or persons become aware of their sexuality.
- shared monopoly** a situation that occurs when four or fewer companies supply 50 percent or more of a particular market.
- sick role** the set of patterned expectations that defines the norms and values appropriate for individuals who are sick and for those who interact with them.
- significant others** those persons whose care, affection, and approval are especially desired and who are most important in the development of the self.
- slavery** an extreme form of stratification in which some people are owned or controlled by others for the purpose of economic or sexual exploitation.
- small group** a collectivity small enough for all members to be acquainted with one another and to interact simultaneously.
- social bond theory** the proposition that the probability of deviant behavior increases when a person's ties to society are weakened or broken.
- social change** the alteration, modification, or transformation of public policy, culture, or social institutions over time.
- social construction of reality** the process by which our perception of reality is largely shaped by the subjective meaning that we give to an experience.
- social control** systematic practices that social groups develop in order to encourage conformity to norms, rules, and laws and to discourage deviance.
- social Darwinism** Herbert Spencer's belief that those species of animals, including human beings, best adapted to their environment survive and prosper, whereas those poorly adapted die out.
- social devaluation** a situation in which a person or group is considered to have less social value than other persons or groups.
- social epidemiology** the study of the causes and distribution of health, disease, and impairment throughout a population.
- social facts** Emile Durkheim's term for patterned ways of acting, thinking, and feeling that exist outside any one individual but that exert social control over each person.
- social group** a group that consists of two or more people who interact frequently and share a common identity and a feeling of interdependence.
- social institution** a set of organized beliefs and rules that establishes how a society will attempt to meet its basic social needs.
- social interaction** the process by which people act toward or respond to other people; the foundation for all relationships and groups in society.
- social mobility** the movement of individuals or groups from one level in a stratification system to another.
- social movement** an organized group that acts consciously to promote or resist change through collective action.
- social script** a "playbook" that "actors" use to guide their verbal replies and overall performance to achieve the desired goal of the conversation or fulfill the role they are playing.
- social stratification** the hierarchical arrangement of large social groups based on their control of basic resources.
- social structure** the complex framework of societal institutions (such as the economy, politics, and religion) and the social practices (such as rules and social roles) that make up a society and that organize and establish limits on people's behavior.
- socialism** an economic system characterized by public ownership of the means of production, the pursuit of collective goals, and centralized decision making.
- socialization** the lifelong process of social interaction through which individuals acquire a self-identity and the physical, mental, and social skills needed for survival in society.
- socialized medicine** a health care system in which the government owns the medical care facilities and employs the physicians.
- society** a large social grouping that shares the same geographical territory and is subject to the same political authority and dominant cultural expectations.
- sociobiology** the systematic study of "social behavior from a biological perspective."
- socioeconomic status (SES)** a combined measure that attempts to classify individuals, families, or households in terms of factors such as income, occupation, and education to determine class location.
- sociological imagination** C. Wright Mills's term for the ability to see the relationship between individual experiences and the larger society.
- sociology** the systematic study of human society and social interaction.
- sociology of family** the subdiscipline of sociology that attempts to describe and explain patterns of family life and variations in family structure.
- split-labor market** the division of the economy into two areas of employment: a primary sector or upper tier, composed of higher-paid (usually dominant-group) workers in more secure jobs, and a secondary sector or lower tier, composed of lower-paid (often subordinate-group) workers in jobs with little security and hazardous working conditions.
- state** the political entity that possesses a legitimate monopoly over the use of force within its territory to achieve its goals.

status a socially defined position in a group or society characterized by certain expectations, rights, and duties.

status set all the statuses that a person occupies at a given time.

status symbols a material sign that informs others of a person's specific status.

stereotypes overgeneralizations about the appearance, behavior, or other characteristics of members of particular categories.

strain theory the proposition that people feel strain when they are exposed to cultural goals that they are unable to obtain because they do not have access to culturally approved means of achieving those goals.

subcontracting an agreement in which a corporation contracts with other (usually smaller) firms to provide specialized components, products, or services to the larger corporation.

subculture a category of people who share distinguishing attributes, beliefs, values, and/or norms that set them apart in some significant manner from the dominant culture.

subordinate group a group whose members, because of physical or cultural characteristics, are disadvantaged and subjected to unequal treatment and discrimination by the dominant group.

succession the process by which a new category of people or type of land use gradually predominates in an area formerly dominated by another group or type of land use.

superego Sigmund Freud's term for the conscience, consisting of the moral and ethical aspects of personality.

survey a poll in which the researcher gathers facts or attempts to determine the relationships among facts.

symbol anything that meaningfully represents something else.

symbolic interactionist perspectives the sociological approach that views society as the sum of the interactions of individuals and groups.

T

taboos mores so strong that their violation is considered to be extremely offensive and even unmentionable.

technology the knowledge, techniques, and tools that allow people to transform resources into usable forms and the

knowledge and skills required to use them after they are developed.

terrorism the calculated, unlawful use of physical force or threats of violence against persons or property in order to intimidate or coerce a government, organization, or individual for the purpose of gaining some political, religious, economic, or social objective.

tertiary deviance deviance that occurs when a person who has been labeled a deviant seeks to normalize the behavior by relabeling it as nondeviant.

tertiary socialization the process of learning that takes place when adults move into new settings where they must accept certain ideas or engage in specific behaviors that are appropriate to that specific setting.

tertiary-sector production the sector of the economy that is involved in the provision of services rather than goods.

theory a set of logically interrelated statements that attempts to describe, explain, and (occasionally) predict social events.

theory of racial formation the idea that actions of the government substantially define racial and ethnic relations in the United States.

total institution Erving Goffman's term for a place where people are isolated from the rest of society for a set period of time and come under the control of the officials who run the institution.

totalitarianism a political system in which the state seeks to regulate all aspects of people's public and private lives.

tracking the assignment of students to specific curriculum groups and courses on the basis of their test scores, previous grades, or other criteria.

traditional authority power that is legitimized on the basis of long-standing custom.

transgender person an individual whose gender identity (self-identification as woman, man, neither, or both) does not match the person's assigned sex (identification by others as male, female, or intersex based on physical/genetic sex).

transnational corporations large corporations that are headquartered in one country but sell and produce goods and services in many countries.

triad a group composed of three members.

U

underclass those who are poor, seldom employed, and caught in long-term deprivation that results from low levels of education and income and high rates of unemployment.

unemployment rate the percentage of unemployed persons in the labor force actively seeking jobs.

universal health care a health care system in which all citizens receive medical services paid for by tax revenues.

urbanization the process by which an increasing proportion of a population lives in cities rather than in rural areas.

V

validity the extent to which a study or research instrument accurately measures what it is supposed to measure.

value contradictions values that conflict with one another or are mutually exclusive.

values collective ideas about what is right or wrong, good or bad, and desirable or undesirable in a particular culture.

variable any concept with measurable traits or characteristics that can change or vary from one person, time, situation, or society to another.

victimless crimes crimes involving a willing exchange of illegal goods or services among adults.

violent crime actions—murder, rape, robbery, and aggravated assault—involving force or the threat of force against others.

W

wealth the value of all of a person's or family's economic assets, including income, personal property, and income-producing property.

welfare state a state in which there is extensive government action to provide support and services to the citizens.

working class (proletariat) Karl Marx's term for those who must sell their labor to the owners in order to earn enough money to survive.

world systems theory a perspective that examines the role of capitalism, and particularly the transnational division of labor, in a truly global system held together by economic ties.

Z

zero population growth the point at which no population increase occurs from year to year.

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